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feedback@guardian.co.tz

+255 745 700710

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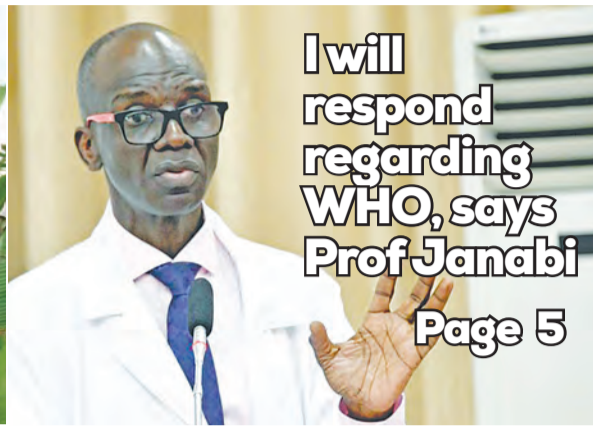
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Parents urged not to hide children with disabilities Page 6

World Bank hands \$104m gender parity loans, grants

By Henry Mwangonde

THE government has signed a \$104m (257bn/-) grant and concessional loan agreement with the World Bank to support a key policy initiative aimed at advancing gender equality countrywide.

Dr Mwigulu Nchemba, the Finance minister, said at the signing ceremony in Dar es Salaam yesterday that key objectives include supporting community-based women's groups.

Others are improving women's business skills and market connections, increasing access to credit through revolving loan funds, and enhancing GBV response services, he said.

The project is expected to directly benefit around 319,850 women and indirectly impact an additional 399,000 individuals, including members of beneficiary households, he stated.

Aligned with the Third National Five-Year Development Plan (2021/22-2025/26), the Draft Development Vision 2050, and Tanzania's broader development agenda, the pro-

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Laigwanan (Maasai traditional leader) Lengumo Permira (2nd-L) is awarded a pair of khangas bearing a message calling for the elimination of gender-based violence. It was shortly after he received an award at a WILDAF/MKUKI ceremony held in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday in connection with the headway Tanzania has made in the war on GBV. The event attracted government officials, members of the diplomatic corps and an array of other stakeholders credited with having taken a noticeable part in the efforts. It was the climax of this year's edition (Nov 25 to Dec 10) of '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' at national level. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Lissu: No reforms, no new elections

• Sets out chairmanship bid for Chadema, says Mbowe has overstayed

By Guardian Reporter

CHADEMA vice chairman (Mainland) Tundu Lissu is initiating a renewed push for constitutional reform as he seeks to replace long-serving chairman Freeman Mbowe at the helm of the opposition party.

In a pulsating address to his followers and a breadth of onlookers at Mlimani City yesterday, he said is also pursuing an independent electoral system and a commit-

ment to justice and human rights.

He suggested well ahead of his being voted to the party's top post that Chadema's new slogan should be "no reforms, no elections," underlining that the party should refuse to participate in elections unless substantial changes are made to the country's electoral framework.

"We need to return to our core agenda—a new democratic constitution, an independent electoral system, and justice

for all,' he said, pointing at the need to "revitalise the morale and fighting spirit of Chadema leaders, members and supporters."

"There is need for a new leadership style, one that privileges confrontation over reconciliation, which has often been the party's approach in the past," he stated.

He described himself as the ideal candidate

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De-dollarisation policy 'strains tour operators'

By Guardian Correspondent,

Arusha

TOURISM industry players face financial strain due to the government's de-dollarization policy, key stakeholders affirm.

Wilbard Chambulo, the Tanzania Association of Tour Op-

erators (TATO) chairman, said in an interview early this week that many of the association's 300 members have problems arising from the impact of the de-dollarization policy.

The conversion process and uncertainty surrounding exchange rates create significant challenges for operators, especially as tour operators tradi-

tionally price their services in the US dollar, thus abandoning this peg complexity and financial inefficiency, he said.

He urged that tour operators need to pay entry fees in the various national parks in the global currency in order to streamline operations for international clients, insisting that this also boosts the coun-

try's foreign reserves.

Elirehema Maturu, the TATO executive director, said that despite the challenges, tour operators need to remain patient as discussions with the government are ongoing to find a resolution.

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'Climate change may cut 4.0pc of total GDP come 2050'

By Guardian Reporter

THE Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR) for Tanzania that has just been published by the World Bank said that without significant climate action, economic growth could be reduced by up to 4 percent by 2050.

Nathan Belete, World Bank country director for Tanzania, said at the launching of the report in Dar es Salaam yesterday, that the effects of climate change could also push an estimated 2.6m people into poverty, pushing internal migration of as many as 13m people across the country.

The report highlights the urgent need to

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SPORTS Page 20



Kagoma fit again as Simba prepare for CAF Confederation Cup battle

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Simba prioritize Mpanzu registration as Lakred exits



Pedestrians find it impossible to cross or otherwise move along a flooded point at the DIT section of Dar es Salaam's Bibi Titi Road yesterday following a dawn downpour in the parts of the city. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel



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'Climate change may cut 4.0pc total GDP by 2050'

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integrate climate change issues into the country's development agenda, noting that Tanzania's Vision 2050 needs to align its climate action outlook with economic growth and poverty reduction goals.

"Tanzania has made impressive strides in social and economic development, but high poverty levels and an over-reliance on low-productivity agriculture make the economy vulnerable to climate risks," the director affirmed.

Integrating climate change efforts in development planning is a vital strategy for the country to ensure future growth and resilience, with the new report providing an overview of Tanzania's potential climate futures.

It outlines key intervention areas to achieve resilient, low-carbon and inclusive growth by 2050, showing several actionable pathways to safeguard the country's development objectives, he stated.

One key focus is equipping people to cope with climate risks and access opportunities, stressing social protection, improving access to water, sanitation, health services and education, "creating climate-compatible jobs to support vulnerable communities in adapting to climate shocks," he further noted.

Optimizing land and water use to boost agricultural production, improving land and water management, investing in climate-smart technology and resilient infrastructure are key objectives, it says.

It also stresses promoting nature-based tourism to enhance rural economic activities while lowering greenhouse gas emissions, prioritizing resilient and low-carbon infrastructure being another key area.

It highlights the need for developing infrastructure in transport, energy and digital sectors to enhance resilience to climate events and reduce emissions. Special attention

is also given to emerging sectors such as energy transition minerals, he said, pointing out strengthening institutional arrangements to support climate action is also crucial.

The report calls for building strong governance frameworks, enhancing coordination between central and local governments and involving the private sector in climate initiatives.

It stresses the importance of mobilizing climate financing, reorienting public spending towards climate-compatible development, attracting private investment, and leveraging tools such as carbon markets and insurance to finance key climate actions in sectors like agriculture, energy and transport.

Finance minister Dr. Mwigulu Nchemba acknowledged at the meeting that climate challenges faced by the country, underlining the government's commitment to sustainable growth.

"We are working towards creating a more sustainable path for our country, with a focus on equipping our vulnerable communities to face climate challenges while unlocking new opportunities for growth," he stated.

The climatei report is part of the World Bank's broader effort to guide countries in integrating climate and development, with the reports being designed to help governments, businesses and other stakeholders identify effective strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

They show how to adapt to the changing climate while aligning these actions with broader development goals, he elaborated.

As Tanzania moves forward with Vision 2050, the World Bank report serves as a critical tool in shaping the country's climate response, ensuring that future growth is both sustainable and resilient to the climate challenges ahead, the minister added



Zanzibar President Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi hosts talks at Zanzibar State House on Wednesday with a visiting delegation of specialist doctors from India's MIOT Hospital, led by CEO Dr Prithivi Mohandas (3rd-L). Photo: Zanzibar State House

World Bank hands \$104m gender parity loans, grants

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ject places gender equality "at the heart of the country's growth strategy," the minister affirmed.

The project, titled 'Together,' is intended to demonstrate the government's strong commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality, he said.

It is meant to foster inclusive growth that ensures that no one is left behind, he said, highlighting that it comprises a \$4m grant and a \$100m concessional loan component.

The project is designed to increase women's access to economic opportunities and strengthen the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and uplift response services in

both parts of the union, he said.

Nathan Belete, the World Bank country director, noted the significant challenges Tanzanian women face in taking up economic opportunities, citing a drop in the proportion of employed women from 79 percent in 2004-05 to 73 percent in 2015-16. Additionally, there is a 20-30 percent gender gap in agricultural productivity, as women entrepreneurs earn 46 percent less than men, he said, pointing at limited access to quality childcare and the persistence of GBV, despite some improvements in its overall frequency.

The "Togetherness" project will focus on increasing economic opportunities for women and strengthening services for preventing and responding to

GBV, addressing gender inequality by empowering women economically and challenging harmful gender norms that contribute to GBV.

Women's role in building climate-resilient communities and recognizing their vital contributions in climate-sensitive sectors is also included in the design, in the project set to be implemented in a series of pilot districts.

Its key components include improving access to finance and economic opportunities for women through community-based models, strengthening GBV prevention and response services, innovations in quality childcare and digital systems alongside overall project management, monitoring and evaluation, he added.

De-dollarisation policy 'straining tour operators'

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Raising hopes that a consensus will soon be reached, he said that one potential solution is to establish a stable exchange rate for the Tanzanian shilling to avoid fluctuations and provide predictability for tour operators. Acknowledging that the government's goal in de-dollarization is to reduce dependency on foreign currency and enhance economic stability by strengthening the shilling, he said that for the tourism industry, the policy has created a challenging environment as businesses struggle to adapt to new currency use bottlenecks.

"If the policy remains in place, a fixed exchange rate for shilling-based transactions could help alleviate the financial burden on operators, allowing tour operators to plan and operate with greater confidence," he said, underlining that operators incur significant losses as they struggle with fluctuating exchange rates.

The policy effected on July 1 imposed a nationwide ban on dollar transactions for services offered within the country, which the stakeholder says it has wrought unintended consequences for the tourism industry.

Many tour operators quietly endure financial difficulties rather than publicly faulting the pol-

icy, he said, recalling that as part of the de-dollarization rule, the Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) and Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) directed that all entry fees be paid in Tanzanian shillings, a departure from the industry's long-standing use of the global currency for such transactions.

Nearly six months later, tour operators are registering their frustration, arguing that the new rules push them to absorb higher costs as commercial banks offer less favourable exchange rates than the fixed rates set by the tourism sector regulatory agencies.

The dollar conversion rate dropped to 2,360/- as of December 12 but tour operators are still required to pay entry fees based on 2,609/- exchange rate for the dollar, a discrepancy of 249/- on each dollar transacted, thus leading to significant losses for operators.

"These discrepancies are draining our resources," one operator stated, while TANAPA manager Juliet Lyimo said the conservator is merely an agent of the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) and does not set applicable exchange rates. The rates are dictated by the TRA in accordance with government policy, he added.



John Chikoma, Executive Director of the Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania (JET), pictured in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, yesterday speaking on cooperation between the media and NGOs in sustainable land management and the combating of desertification and droughts. He was on the sidelines of the (Dec 2 to 13) 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. From-L: moderator Meral Mungan Arda from Türkiye, Brazil's Beatriz De Araujo and Argentina's Ana Di Pangrasio. Photo: Guardian Photographer

Chief Justice Koome tells 'cyberbullies' he will not resign

NAIROBI

Chief Justice Martha Koome has dismissed calls for her resignation, stating that she remains undeterred by critics.

Koome urged those attempting to defame her to reconsider their plan, as she has no intention of stepping down.

The CJ revealed that she has frequently been a victim of cyberbullying and expressed confusion over the motives behind such

attacks.

Without naming her critics, Koome emphasized that their disparaging remarks and actions would not deter her from performing her duties.

"When I speak, I always confess that I'm a victim of cyberbullying—or is it called technologically facilitated gender-based violence? But I know the intention. It's a business model; I don't know to achieve what. Maybe to

scare, distract, defame, or hound me out of office, but they can try something else," Koome said.

The Chief Justice reaffirmed the Judiciary's commitment to combatting corruption in the country, despite the challenges posed by existential threats and underfunding.

She underscored that these challenges would not deter the Judiciary from executing its mandate.

This comes amid ongoing criticism of the Judiciary from various quarters, including prominent lawyers and human rights organisations, who have accused the institution of corruption.

Koome has been at the forefront of urging those with evidence of corruption within the Judiciary to come forward and present the necessary details to facilitate investigations and appropriate action.

Lissu: No reforms, no elections

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"for this critical moment in Tanzania's political history," telling the audience of his "record of integrity, patriotism and steadfast commitment to the country's democratic struggle" as the premise of qualifications for the chairmanship.

"This new phase of the struggle requires a leader who has demonstrated integrity and earned the

trust of the people. I believe my history of integrity and trustworthiness is well known to most Tanzanians," he further stated. An auxiliary aspect of Lissu's platform is advocating for constitutional reforms within Chadema itself, he said, pointing at the need to restore term limits for party leadership positions.

This will foster a culture of leadership renewal and

fresh ideas in the leading opposition party, he stated, arguing that the party has grown larger and more sophisticated, "and we no longer have to fear a shortage of capable leaders."

Reintroducing term limits would prevent leaders from overstaying their welcome and help reduce internal divisions caused by succession struggles, he emphasised.

"This move will not only discourage power struggles but will also ensure that Chadema remains vibrant and adaptable, fostering new leaders for each generation," he said.

Term limits would help dismantle the sycophancy culture that tends to flourish when leaders hold power indefinitely, the presumptive candidate intoned.

Japan, UNFPA partner to bolster health services in Kigoma Region

By Correspondent James Kandoya

JAPAN's government in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had handed a vehicle and essential medical equipment worth over 800m/- to improve sexual and reproductive health services in Kigoma Region.

Speaking at the handing-over ceremony held in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday this week, Japan's ambassador to Tanzania, Yasushi Misawa highlighted that the initiative was part of his government's supplementary budget project.

He said the project allocated funds to UNFPA for a year-long initiative aimed at increasing accessibility to quality maternal and new-born health services.

The ambassador emphasised that the project also seeks to provide adolescents with better access to health information and distribute dignity kits to women and girls in refugee camps and host communities in Kigoma.

"The government of Japan remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting vulnerable communities. Through this partnership, we aim to ensure that women, adolescent girls, and first-time young mothers have access to essential health services, fostering hope and resilience among those most affected," he said.

Misawa further noted that the government of Japan entrusted UNFPA Tanzania to implement the project in collaboration with the Tanzania Red Cross Society, Kigoma regional authorities, and other stakeholders.

He underscored that Kigoma's refugee camps, Nyarugusu and Nduita, host over 190,000 refugees, with around 15 percent being women of reproductive age.

Over the past two decades, the Embassy of Japan has implemented seven education, health and sanitation projects across various districts in Kigoma.

Misawa reaffirmed Japan's long-standing relationship with Tanzania, spanning over 60 years, and its commitment to supporting the country's social and economic development.

Kigoma Regional Administrative Secretary, Hassan Rugwa, expressed his gratitude for the initiative.

"This partnership is a significant step forward in addressing the criti-



Jerome Albou (L), Acting Director of mobile service provider Yas (until recently running as Tigo), pictured in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday receiving an award from Osama Nawayseh, a representative of US-based firm Ookla. Sources said Yas was awarded after emerging the fastest growing network in Tanzania for the third time running. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

cal health needs of our communities. The support from Japan and UNFPA will not only strengthen our health systems but also save lives by ensuring that women and young girls have access to the care they urgently need," he said.

Mark Schreiner, UNFPA's country representative, highlighted the importance of the partnership.

"This initiative reflects our shared vision of ensuring no woman or girl is left behind. The generous support from the government of Japan enables us to sustain and expand critical health services that save lives and empower communities," he said.

Schreiner also noted that the project aims to address critical gaps in reproductive health services

in the Kigoma region, where limited access to quality care has led to significant health risks, including pregnancy complications.

Rugwa said the initiative will deliver essential resources, such as medical equipment, dignity kits, and reproductive health supplies, while also strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers.

Tanzania's power grid to be connected to neighbouring countries - Biteko

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

TANZANIA is posed to connect neighbouring countries with electricity upon the completion of the 400kV power transmission line project and the expansion of 400kV substations from Chalinze, Coast Region, to Zuzu in Dodoma, it has been learnt.

The deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Energy, Dr Doto Biteko, made the statement yesterday, noting that currently the country is connected to Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya

with plans to expand to Zambia and later Malawi.

Speaking during the launch of the 513bn/- power transmission line project at Zuzu in Dodoma on Wednesday, Biteko added that Tanzania is ready to tap the opportunities in both Esat Africa Community and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

"We are working to connect all our neighbours to our electricity grid. We already have connections with Burundi, Rwanda, and Kenya and now

we're moving towards Zambia and Malawi. Our goal is to use the surplus electricity we generate to trade with our neighbours," he said.

He cited the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP) as an example, where not all turbines are operational because the current electricity demand cannot absorb the supply, noting that this surplus electricity can be used to benefit neighbouring countries through regional initiatives such as the East African Power Pool and the SADC

Power Pool.

During the event, the DPM urged the public to collaborate with the government in safeguarding and maintaining the electricity infrastructure for the country's development.

Dr Biteko revealed that in just a period between October and November this year, there were 23 cases of vandalism involving theft of cables and transformer oil. Also 35 recorded incidents of infrastructure theft occurred between July 2023 to

September, this year.

"It is frustrating when a few individuals, driven by greed, sabotage the infrastructure, causing widespread outages. For example, in Mkuranga, Coast Region, we recently found a person with a large stash of stolen cables, including those meant for SGR (Standard Gauge Railway). These incidents have left people without electricity, disrupting their daily activities and causing financial losses. Let me emphasise that this infrastructure, once completed, will re-

quire collective protection," he said.

He said that protecting electricity infrastructure is not solely the responsibility of security forces but requires the active participation of the entire community.

Dr Biteko highlighted the government's efforts to ensure sufficient energy supply to support industrial growth and improve citizens' livelihoods, noting that these developments would also position Tanzania as a key energy supplier to neighboring countries.



PREVIOUSLY ISSUED SUKUKS BOND

iTrust Finance Limited since August 2021 has successfully issued ten Sukuk Bond offerings with a total nominal value of **TZS 38 billion**. These issuances attracted subscriptions amounting to **TZS 72.93 billion**, representing an overall subscription rate of **183%**. To date, we have fully redeemed five Sukuks at maturity, disbursing a total of **TZS 24.04 billion** in principal payments.

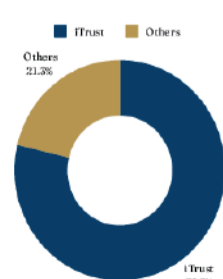
Within Tanzania, iTrust Finance holds an issuance market share of **78.74%** in Sukuk bond issuances. In November 2024, we concluded our tenth issuance, raising **TZS 13.27 billion** against a nominal value of **TZS 5 billion** achieving an exceptional subscription rate of **265.4%**. This issuance set a new milestone for our company, marking the highest amount raised in a single offering to date.

Sukuk Issue	Amount Offered (Million TZS)	Amount Subscribed (Million TZS)	Subscription Rate	Issue Date
1st Issue	2 000	2 720	136%	Aug - 21
2nd Issue	1 500	2 000	133%	Nov - 21
3rd Issue	3 000	3 000	100%	Apr - 22
4th Issue	5 000	5 320	106%	Aug - 22
5th Issue	5 000	11 000	220%	Nov - 22
6th Issue	2 500	4 800	192%	May - 23
7th Issue	5 000	7 700	154%	July - 23
8th Issue	5 000	11 320	226%	Dec - 23
9th Issue	4 000	11 800	295%	Jun - 24
10th Issue	5 000	13 270	265%	Nov - 24
TOTAL	38 000	72 930		

TZS 38 BN TOTAL AMOUNT OFFERED **TZS 72.93 BN** TOTAL AMOUNT SUBSCRIPTION
TZS 24.04 BN TOTAL AMOUNT MATURED AND FULLY PAID

OUR SUKUK MARKET SHARE

- **78.74%** iTrust Finance
- **21.26%** Others



ANNOUNCEMENT

RESULTS OF THE 10TH SUKUK WAKALA (BOND) PRIVATE PLACEMENT ISSUE

iTrust Finance Limited (through Imaan) received approval from CMSA to issue its **10th Sukuk Wakala (Islamic) Bond**. The size of the issuance was **Tanzanian Shillings 5 billion** with a Greenshoe option of **Tanzanian Shillings 5 Billion** by way of Private Placement. The Offer opened to Institutional and private investors on 4th November 2024 and closed on 22nd November 2024.

iTrust Finance Limited is pleased to announce the successful oversubscription of its 10th Sukuk issuance, whereby **Tanzanian Shillings 13.27 billion** was raised against the issued amount of **Tanzanian Shillings 5 Billion**, representing a subscription of **265.4%**.

The Sukuk Wakala Certificates will be dispatched to respective Sukuk holders on 2nd December 2024.

We acknowledge and recognize the trust and confidence that our Sukuk investors have continued to have on us. The Management of iTrust Finance Limited also acknowledges and recognizes the guidance and support provided by the Bank of Tanzania (BOT) and Capital Markets and Securities Authority (CMSA) in making the issuance a success.

We extend special appreciation to our partners including FIMCO Limited, the Co-Transaction Advisor; Endoxa Law, the Legal Adviser; Naseha Consultancy, the Sharia Structure Advisor and CRDB Bank PLC, the Receiving Bank, Registrar and Custodian.

Issued by,
Chief Executive Officer,
iTrust Finance Limited Plot no 429, Block C Mahanda Street P.O. Box 22636 Dar es Salaam

Dr Jingu advocates safe use of chemicals for the nation's good

By Correspondent James Kandoya

HEALTH ministry Permanent Secretary, Dr John Jingu, has urged stakeholders in the chemical industry to prioritise the safe and responsible use of chemicals as a critical component of advancing national development.

Dr Jingu made the statement in Dodoma yesterday during the opening of a three-day training on chemical management and regulation, organized by the Government Chemist Laboratory Authority (GCLA), Eastern Zone Office.

He emphasized that while chemicals, when used responsibly and in accordance with established guidelines, can provide significant benefits, misuse can result in severe consequences.

"Most economic activities and daily life rely on chemicals," Dr Jingu noted.

He added: "This training is vital as it ensures the safe and correct use of chemicals, which in turn drives development. When handled properly, chemicals offer great benefits. However, misuse can have devastating effects, including fatalities, health problems, and environmental harm."

Dr Jingu also commended GCLA for adopting the slogan "Training Continues," underscoring the ongoing need for education in the chemical field.

He pointed out that new challenges and innovations emerge regularly, making continuous learning essential to ensuring the safe use of chemicals and protecting both human health and the

environment.

Chief Government Chemist Dr Fidelice Mafumiko outlined the authority's efforts to fulfil its legal responsibilities, including providing education and overseeing the registration and inspection of chemicals.

He explained that these efforts help the government track imported chemicals, their intended uses, and ensure they comply with legal standards to safeguard health and the environment.

"To date, 5,933 stakeholders in the chemical sector have been officially registered, a significant increase from just 12 stakeholders when the Industrial and Household Chemicals Management and Regulation Act (Chapter 182) were first implemented in 2012," he said.

Both Berina Valence and Jimmy Mkongwe participants in the training expressed their appreciation, noting the invaluable knowledge they gained to shift away from outdated and hazardous chemical management practices at their workplaces.

This training has been incredibly valuable. It has helped us identify areas where we were relying on old habits and provided the guidance needed to correct our approach for safer and more effective practices going forward," they said.

The GCLA, established by the Government Chemist Laboratory Authority Act No. 8 of 2016, plays a vital role in regulating and managing chemicals in Tanzania.



Zainabu Islam (in all black), given as one of the owners of the multi-storey building which collapsed recently in Dar es Salaam's sprawling Kariakoo market zone, leaves the city's Kisutu Resident Magistrate's Court yesterday. She appeared before the court to answer charges in connection with the tragic incident, in which dozens of people died and scores were injured. Photo: Correspondent Imani Nathaniel

Banana viral disease destroying plantations in more than seven regions of the mainland

By Correspondent Marc Nkwame, Moshi

THE world's oldest and deadliest banana viral disease-bunchy top disease (BBTD) is rapidly spreading across Tanzania, destroying plantations in more than seven regions of the mainland.

But the worst part of the bargain, according to agricultural experts, is that the viral disease has no cure with the only solution being uprooting and destroying all the affected plantations on the farms.

Speaking recently in Moshi, George Mahuku, the Plant Pathologist

from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, said the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is working to raise awareness among farmers across the country through farmer learning events teaching them on the proper measures, including

cultural methods to reduce the spread.

"We don't have any resistance to the disease and the only way is to resort to 'prevention being better than cure,'" explained Mahuku, adding that, like other virus maladies, the Banana Top Disease has neither preventive remedies like herbicide or pesticides.

Already experienced in Egypt, Burundi and DR Congo, the 145 years old, Banana bunchy top disease (BBTD) is severely impacting banana production in Tanzania threatening the country's agricultural sector and food security as well as threatening livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers.

The IITA pathologist explained that the banana top disease is only spread through transplanting of plantains from the affected regions to other parts and also transmitted by some small sap-sucking insects called aphids.

"The only solution is to destroy all affected plantains, clear the farms and wait for three months then introduce fresh crops that have been approved by agricultural experts and recognized institutions," said Mahuku.

During a visit to some farms in Moshi, an

expert researcher from the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA) Hamadi Lyimo, explained that the disease was first traced in Buhigwe District of Kigoma Region, in 2020 on the shores of Lake Tanganyika along the western peninsula.

The disease had apparently crossed into Tanzania from Burundi where it affected farms after spreading from the Democratic Republic of Congo where it was first traced in the 1960s.

In 2021 the Banana Bunchy Top disease spread to Northern Tanzania, affecting bananas in the Moshi urban and rural districts of Kilimanjaro, then afterwards blew out to other mainland regions of the country.

Seven regions including Dar-es-Salaam, Pwani, Morogoro, Mbeya, Kilimanjaro, Kigoma, Mwanza and even some selected places like Dodoma where banana plantations are few and far apart.

The Agricultural Officer for Ng'ambo and Msalanga wards of Moshi District, Sufiani Ally Mganga said before the disease erupted in Kilimanjaro, farms in each of the two local wards used to produce over 6 tons of bananas per year, but the production is less than half-a-ton.

Wami Ruvu Basin restores five rivers damaged by environmental degradation

By Correspondent Idda Mushi, Morogoro

WAMI Ruvu Basin has restored 16.1 kilometres of rivers that had changed their cause or damaged by various factors, including environmental degradation from human activity

Eng. Elibariki Mmasy, director of the Wami Ruvu Basin board told journalists yesterday here, detailing the restoration of five rivers that feed into the Mindu Dam, including the Mlali, Mgeta, and Lukulunge rivers. "Our goal is to return rivers that have been choked with sand and silt to their natural position," Mmasy said.

He added: "The main challenge has been the accumulation of sand and silt in our rivers, caused by human activity such as farming and livestock keeping on steep slopes. During heavy rains, the sand and silt are washed into the rivers, causing them to lose their course."

The environmental degradation has led to serious flooding during heavy rains, as rivers, lacking well-defined banks, overflow into surrounding homes, farms, and damage infrastructure such as railways and roads, resulting in significant damage. In order to address the challenge, Mmasy explained that the rivers were dredged, and vegetation was planted along the banks to restore their flow and ensure the rivers feed back into the Mindu Dam. Additionally, two key tributaries, the Mgeta and Dakawa rivers—responsible for 34 per cent of the Ruvu river's flow—had also lost their direction. These, too, have been restored by the Wami Ruvu Basin Board, which worked to dredge the rivers, block areas of water loss, and improve water flow to Dar es Salaam.



HAVEN OF PEACE ACADEMY

EXPERIENCED BUSINESS MANAGER, PRIMARY PRINCIPAL, SCHOOL COUNSELOR, PD COORDINATOR, INFORMATION & MEDIA SPECIALIST AND TEACHERS NEEDED TO SERVE AT AN INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

HAVEN OF PEACE ACADEMY

Haven of Peace Academy (HOPAC) is a faith-based educational institution owned and operated by Haven of Peace Trust.

HOPAC was founded in 1994 for children of missionaries and has evolved into a Christian international school with a diverse student population that includes children of missionaries and full-time Christian service workers, children of expats working in the non-profit and for-profit sectors, and children of Tanzanians working in the non-profit, for-profit, and public sectors. The school is located in Kunduchi at the junction of Salasala Road and Bagamoyo Road in Kinondoni Municipal in Dar es Salaam and is currently inviting applications for vacancies of competent, experienced, and qualified teachers and school personnel.

The following positions are open for the school year 2025/2026 starting

August 2025: Non-teaching positions:

- Business Manager (January 2025)
- Information Science and Media Specialist
- PD Coordinator
- Primary Principal
- School Counselor

Teaching positions:

- Primary teacher
- English teacher
- Math/Science teacher

JOB SUMMARY

The **Business Manager** is a part of the school management and leadership team, reports to the Director and creates a positive learning environment reflective of the love of Christ, supportive of every student, and professional in every aspect. Thus affecting student learning through aiding in different support staff responsibilities such as coordinating business dealings for the school, providing negotiation services, or providing financial support, oversight, and management.

The **Primary School Principal** is a member of the school management and leadership team and reports to the school's Director.

The Primary School Principal oversees KG-Grade 5 students and a 10+ member teaching staff. The Primary School Principal acts as the educational leader of the primary school, responsible for its day-to-day operation, and works closely with the Secondary School Principal to deliver on the overall academic program of the school.

The **PD Coordinator** reports to the Director while working in close communication with the Principals. This is a full time position and will include determining needs, conducting training, and setting up programs to continue in the future. Principals are responsible for formal observations and evaluations of teachers. The Professional Development Coordinator will be a coach and mentor to teachers, but not a supervisor.

The **School Counselor** role is a crucial one in terms of assessing students, families providing emotional and learning support, and advising school leadership on bigger picture issues relating to student emotional health and safety. The Counselor is responsible for actively engaging students, staff and the wider school community in promoting a positive learning environment within the school by providing mental health services that are in line with the school's Christian worldview. He/She is responsible for the delivery of comprehensive mental health services. He/She will also assist with Life Skills classes and be part of the child safety team. This position is not limited to just the hours of the school day. He/She reports to the Director.

The **Information Science & Media Specialist** is under the direct supervision and reports to the Secondary School Principal. The person will be in charge of collecting, organizing, and issuing library resources such as books and videos; cataloging materials; and maintaining the atmosphere and library environment.

Teachers report to the applicable principal and are responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning within their classroom including classroom management,

lesson planning, assessment, and reporting. Teachers also serve as student mentors and usually lead service learning student groups as well as volunteer to lead clubs or coach sports.

Ideal candidates for all positions will be self-motivated, team players, adaptable, and willing to learn with experience working in multicultural, international settings, and fluent in English.

HOPAC follows the Cambridge curriculum and is an ACS/MSA accredited school.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE FOR BUSINESS MANAGER:

- Bachelor's degree in Business or finance, or preferably in relevant field
- CPA Certification desirable, not required
- Minimum five years experience in accounting & finance.
- Minimum three years related experience in the essential functions of the role
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE FOR PD COORDINATOR:

- Minimum BA in Education, Master's degree preferred and preferably 10 years of education experience and/or supervising or coaching teachers.
- Evidence of mastery in excellent teaching techniques and the ability to inspire it in others and experience with Cambridge curriculum, or willingness to learn about and embrace it
- Experience working in a cross-cultural setting, or willingness to be teachable in this area, excellent communication and interpersonal skills and strong organizational skills
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

- Bachelor's degree in sociology or counseling; Master's degree is an advantage
- Counseling license, qualification, or certification preferred
- Minimum of three years of sociology or counseling experience, preferably in a multicultural setting
- Fluent in English, the medium of instruction
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:

- Master's degree in education, educational leadership, or related field; applicable experience in lieu of education will be considered with a Bachelor degree in education
- Minimum of eight years experience in education with three years experience in educational leadership preferred
- Fluent in English, the medium of instruction
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE & MEDIA SPECIALIST:

- Experience in and passion for library services
- Minimum Bachelor or Master's degree in library or related field
- At Least 5 years experience working in a library
- Fluent in English, the medium of instruction
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE FOR TEACHING STAFF:

- Bachelor's degree in education/teaching or PGDE
- Minimum of three years teaching experience, preferably in a multicultural setting
- Experience with Cambridge International curriculum preferred
- Fluent in English, the medium of instruction
- Committed Christian, actively living for God and pursuing spiritual growth

If you are confident that you match the above criteria, please send your **Application letter and CV only through nics.org** to arrive on or before **31st Dec 2024**.

NOTE: Applications sent to personnel@hopac.sc.tz will not be considered.

INVITATION TO BID

RFQ TITLE: Tender for Car hire service delivery
RFQ Number: 2024-HUMULIZA/12/13
Date of Solicitation: 13th December 2024
Closing date and time: 6th January 2025 at 11:00 am
Questions and Clarifications: Due by 6th January 2025

HUMULIZA Organization is a registered Non-governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1997 to provide psychosocial support (PSS) to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). It is located in Nshamba ward, Muleba district, Kagera region of Tanzania in East Africa. The organization was created in response to a household survey conducted in 1996, which discovered that HIV/AIDS was responsible for a growing number of child-headed households (CHH) and orphans. HUMULIZA Organization was officially registered on 21 December 2005 under the Non-Governmental Organization Act No. 24 of 2002 with Registration No. 0586 and on 28th February 2022 was issued with new registration under NGO Act No. 00NGO/R1/00461. Since its establishment has 25 years of operation with good performance and very powerful use of PSS approaches to support MVCs locally and regionally. It operates in 8 Districts of Kagera Region i.e Muleba, Bukoba MC, Bukoba Rural, Misenyi, Ngara, Biharamulo, Karagwe and Kyerwa.

ACHIEVE Project refers to Adolescents and Children HIV Incidence Reduction, Empowerment, and Virus Elimination (ACHIEVE) is a five-year global effort to reach and sustain HIV epidemic control among pregnant and breastfeeding women, adolescents, infants, and children. Humuliza Organization implements ACHIEVE Project since 2021 up to now

The objective of the Assignment
 The overall objective of this assignment is to hire car services to facilitate the implementation of the ACHIEVE project in five councils of the Kagera region from January 2024 to September 2024.

Time frame
 This assignment is expected to be carried out from **January 2024 to September 2024**.

Reporting
 The service provider will report to the HUMULIZA-ACHIEVE Project Manager and Procurement Officer for instructions on dos and don'ts, inspection, and checkups according to the HUMULIZA logistics rules and regulations.

Interested vendors should request the full Terms of Reference (ToR) through email with the subject line **"TOR for Tender for Delivery of Car Hire Service"** to humulizaprocedure@gmail.com before 6th January 2025, 10:00 am

All questions and requests for clarification should be directed to humulizaprocedure@gmail.com with the subject line **"Request for Clarification: Tender for Delivery of Car Hire Service"**.

Interested, eligible vendors who wish to answer this RFP should send their proposals in sealed envelopes to HUMULIZA Head Office by **6th January 2025, 12:00 pm**. All sealed envelopes need to be marked as: **"Tender for Delivery of Car Hire Service"**.

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Iringa district commissioner Heri James (standing) opens capacity building training for members of the Iringa regional defence and security committee jointly coordinated by the Constitution and Legal Affairs ministry and various other institutions. It was held in Iringa municipality earlier this week. Photo: Correspondent Joseph Mwendapole

Heads to discuss strategies in human resources management

By Correspondent Valentine Oforo, Dodoma

HEADS of human resources and administration departments in Tanzania's public service to meet next week in Dodoma to discuss strategies to enhance service delivery and other key issues within the sector.

The two-day meeting, scheduled to take place from December 17 to 19, 2024, will bring together top government officials responsible for managing human resources. The goal is to exchange insights on best practices and address current challenges in human resource management.

Xavier Daudi, the acting Permanent Secretary in the President's Office for Public Service Management and Good Governance shared the details when addressing a news conference yesterday here.

"We will use this meeting to discuss various aspects of human resources supervision in the public service, including the newly introduced digital systems such as e-Watumishi, e-Uhamisho, e-Utendaji, e-Mrejesho, and HR Assessment," Daudi said.

The meeting will focus on reinforcing effective supervision of human resources in line with the country's de-

velopment vision and national priorities. The theme of the meeting will be: "Supervision of Policy and Public Service Laws through human resources systems and improved digital systems."

Daudi emphasised that all heads of HR and Administration departments are required to attend, as the discussions will directly impact the future of public service management in Tanzania.

Participants at the meeting will include heads of HR and Administration from ministries, regional secretariats, local government authorities, independent departments, public entities, and government agencies.

Felister Shuli, director of Establishment in President's Office for Public Service Management and Good Governance highlighted the significance of the Human Resources and Administration department in ensuring effective public service delivery.

She stated that the purpose of the meeting is to strengthen the capacity of HR leaders so they can, in turn, enhance the capacity of other public servants.

Other key topics for discussion during the meeting will include preparations for salary budgets and addressing salary arrears.

I will respond on WHO position, says MNH executive Janabi

By Guardian Reporter

EXECUTIVE Director of Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH), Prof. Mohamed Janabi said he will comment and make his intentions clear when the time comes to run for the position of Regional Director for Africa at the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Prof. Janabi made the remarks yesterday in Dar es Salaam while addressing journalists about the hospital's services, including its achievements, challenges in 2024,

and future expectations.

"When the time comes, I will respond regarding WHO. I will answer the questions thoroughly. For now, I won't comment—let's wait for the official WHO announcement," he said.

Earlier this week, during the swearing-in ceremony of newly appointed ministers, deputy ministers, permanent secretaries, and ambassadors, President Samia Suluhu Hassan revealed that the government would present Prof. Janabi's CV in preparation for a

potential candidacy for the position left vacant following the passing of Dr. Faustine Ndugulile, who died on November 27, 2024, while receiving treatment in India.

Dr. Ndugulile, a public health expert and Member of Parliament for Kigamboni, was one of the five candidates vying to succeed Dr. Matshidiso Moeti of Botswana.

Prof. Janabi has served as the CEO of Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH) since 2022. He is a distinguished medical professional with three degrees: a Bachelor's in



Medicine (MD), a Master's in Medicine (MSc), and a PhD in Medical Sciences.

Before his appointment as CEO of MNH, Prof. Janabi worked at the Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI) from 2015 to 2022. Since 2005, he has also served as Chief Medical Officer to former President Dr. Jakaya Kikwete. Additionally, he has been a lecturer at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) since 2000 and at the University of South Carolina Medical School in the US since 2003.

Prof. Janabi serves as a board member at major healthcare institutions in Tanzania, including JKCI, the Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI), MUHAS, and Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). He has

also been a senior scientist on the HIV Vaccine Trials (TaMoVac) from 1989 to 2002 and Medical Director at the US-based non-governmental organisation Doctors of Africa.

With his extensive career in medical science both in Tanzania and internationally, Prof. Janabi has been involved in numerous research projects and has published 83 papers. His publication "Lifestyle and Your Health" aims to raise awareness among Tanzanians about the importance of understanding their health.

During his address, Prof. Janabi highlighted the hospital's successes, including reducing referrals for specialized services abroad by nearly 90%. However, he also acknowledged the current challenge of limited patient ability to pay for

services.

He explained that, in his professional experience, the main cause of diseases among most patients is lifestyle factors, such as poor diet and lack of exercise, which lead to non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Prof. Janabi also cautioned the public about the risks of consuming too much protein from animal sources, particularly during the festive season when many people indulge in excessive eating. He emphasized the importance of reducing stress through regular exercise, as prolonged stress increases cortisol levels, which can negatively impact blood sugar levels and overall health.

Prof. Janabi provided five health tips, including the importance of knowing your blood pressure, weight, blood sugar levels, and waist circumference. At MNH, he noted that 120 to 150 kidney dialysis treatments are conducted daily, with over 90 per cent of patients suffering from hypertension, diabetes, irregular medication use, and infectious diseases.

He also highlighted that Africa spends \$1.4 billion annually to send its citizens abroad for medical treatment, underscoring the importance of strengthening local healthcare systems.

At MNH-Mloganzila, Prof. Janabi reported that 12 laparoscopic surgeries have been successfully performed, 205 patients have received knee replacements, 23 women have undergone cosmetic surgery, over 200 patients have had bladder balloon surgeries, and 11 patients have had weight-loss surgery, all with positive outcomes.

The Guardian Limited

VACANCY

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Parents urged not to hide children with disabilities

By Correspondent Idda Mushi, Morogoro

PARENTS and guardians of children with disabilities have been urged to stop hiding their children and instead bring them forward to access essential services, including education, healthcare and social support.

Morogoro District Commissioner Mussa Kilakala made the call yesterday here during hand over ceremony of 30 wheelchairs, worth 10.5m/- to people with disabilities. The donation was made by a generous individual through the district commissioner.

While presenting the wheelchairs to recipients and their caregivers, Kilakala emphasised that the community must change its mindset and stop viewing children with disabilities as a curse.

He urged parents and guardians to ensure their children receive basic services, including education, as the 6th phase government has made significant investments in education to guarantee that every child has access to appropriate schooling.

Morogoro District Administrative Secretary Ruth John also spoke at the event, stating that children with disabilities are a gift from God.

She encouraged parents to accept and embrace this reality, bringing their children forward to receive the support they deserve.

Several recipients of the wheelchairs

expressed their heartfelt gratitude, highlighting the positive impact the aid would have on their lives, particularly during the rainy season.

The wheelchairs would enable them to move more freely, making it easier for them to go about their daily activities and participate in income-generating work.

Rehema Senga, a street food vendor from Mlimani Ward, shared her experience:

"It was very difficult for me to move around for work. I had to crawl on my bottom. I always wanted a wheelchair, but I didn't have the means. Now, it's much easier to move from one place to another. Everyone can become a person with a disability. I wasn't like this before, but I kept pushing to remain independent and continue my work."

Other beneficiaries, such as Seleiman Habibu and Juliana Kimungu, who cares for her 11-year-old granddaughter, Careen George, also expressed their appreciation. They said the wheelchairs would greatly improve their ability to move around and perform daily tasks, allowing them to better meet their family's needs.

The recipients also called on the government to provide them with loans to improve their economic situation, particularly through the 10 percent allocation for people with disabilities, women and youth from local councils.



Christina Mndeme (facing camera), Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Vice President's Office (Environment), pictured in Dodoma city on Wednesday holding talks with senior officials of Malawi's Environment and Climate Change ministry constituting part of a Malawian government delegation on a working visit to Tanzania to learn about climate change and carbon trading. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

England's varsity honours Tanzanian archaeologist

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

A Tanzanian archaeologist Prof. Elgidius Edgar Bwinabona Ichumbaki has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bradford of England in recognition of his significant contributions to the field of archaeology.

Ichumbaki, was presented with the honour recently for his contributions to the field.

Prof. Ichumbaki, a distinguished academic and researcher, has made remarkable strides in the study and preservation of Tanzania's rich archaeological heritage.

His work, which includes excavations and research on ancient civilisations, has been instrumental in advancing the understanding of the region's historical and cultural evolution.

In a statement, Prof. Ichumbaki expressed his gratitude for the honor, emphasising the importance of continued research in preserving Africa's archaeological heritage for future generations.

"I am deeply honored to receive this recognition from the University of Bradford. It is a testament

not only to my work but also to the efforts of many others who have been involved in preserving and sharing Africa's rich history," said Prof. Ichumbaki.

He was born in Muleba in the Kagera region, northwest Tanzania, in a polygamous family where his father had seven wives and 38 children.

His father used to hold family meetings under a tree to resolve grievances and reach agreements.

Ichumbaki said: "This was a way of holding everyone accountable, but it also got me interested in her-

itage and preserving stories."

Despite excelling in primary school, Ichumbaki faced limited educational opportunities due to a lack of resources.

To support his family, he sold beer and gin at a bar his mother set up.

His luck changed in 1999 when he was offered a scholarship to attend secondary school.

Balancing work and studies, he went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Culture and Heritage at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in Tanzania.

Ichumbaki's research career took him worldwide, including a trip to Canada with 25 other young people to learn about the sustainable management of UNESCO World Heritage sites.

He brought this knowledge back to Tanzania, where he completed his Master's and PhD.

While working at UDSM, he discovered the University of Bradford's work to digitise heritage sites and visited the city in 2018 and 2021.

His collaboration with the University of Bradford introduced

complex 3D visualisations to preserve heritage, a dramatic change from the previous methods involving paperwork or computer entries.

He was instrumental in digitising and creating copies of these monuments. He said: "We can't know where we are heading unless we know where we are coming from."

"To plan for our future, we must know our past very well. This means we need evidence of what these sites looked like, and how they deteriorated over the decades."

Whale epic migration, astonishes scientists

By Guardian Reporter and Agencies

A Humpback whale has made one of the longest and most unusual migrations ever recorded, possibly driven by climate change, scientists say.

It was seen in the Pacific Ocean off Colombia in 2017, then popped up several years later near Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean - a distance of at least 13,000 km.

The experts think this epic journey might be down to climate change depleting food stocks or perhaps an odyssey to find a mate.

Ekaterina Kalashnikova of the Tanzania Cetaceans Programme said the feat was "truly impressive and unusual even for this highly migratory species".

Dr Kalashnikova said it was very likely the longest distance a humpback whale had ever been recorded travelling.

Humpback whales live in all oceans around the world. They travel long distances every year and have one of the longest migrations of any mammal, swimming from tropical breeding grounds to feeding grounds in cooler waters.

But this male's journey was

even more spectacular, involving two distant breeding grounds.

One theory is that climate change is altering the abundance of the tiny shrimp-like krill humpback whales feed on, forcing them to travel further in search of food.

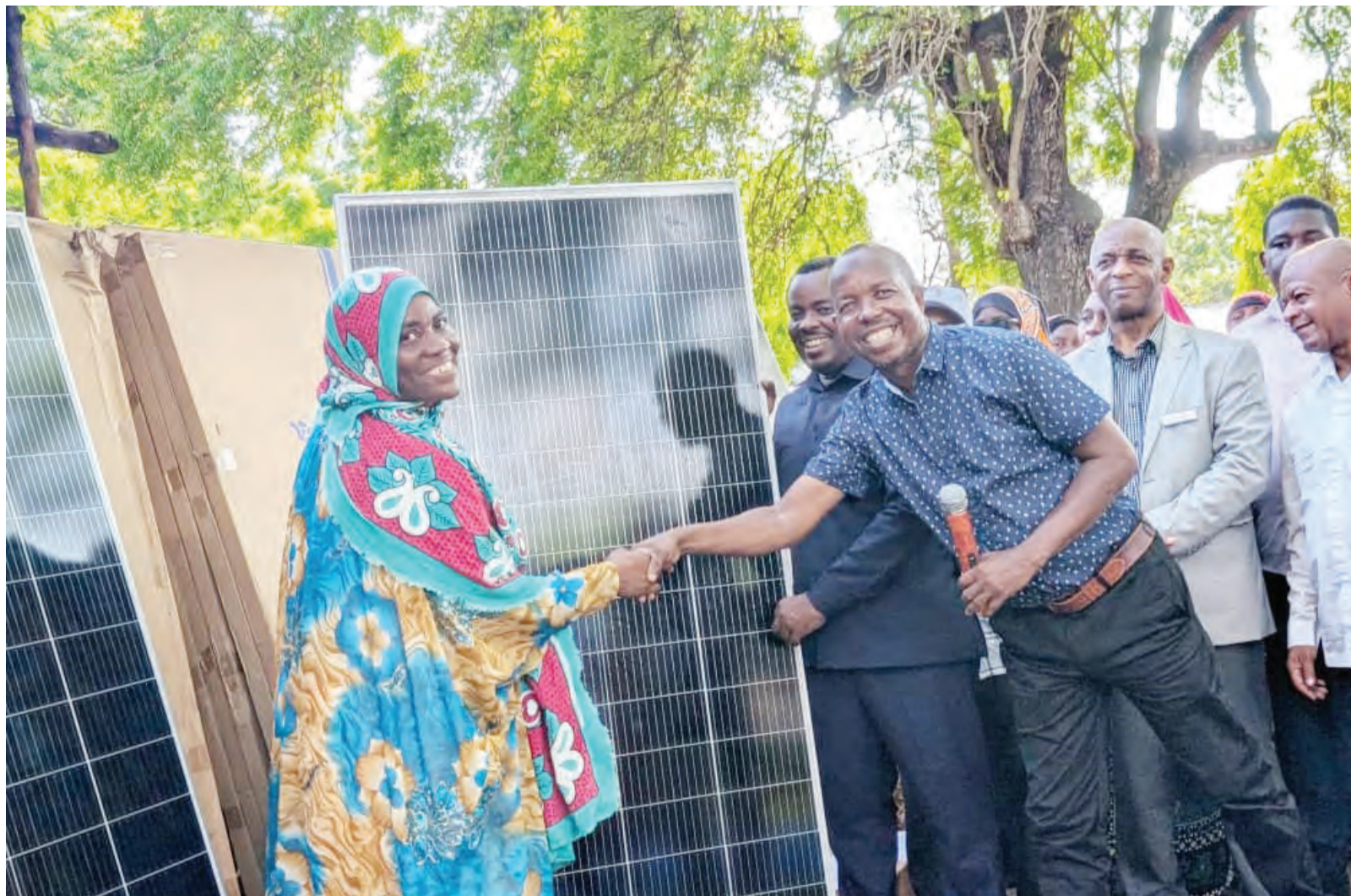
Alternatively, whales may be exploring new breeding grounds as populations rebound through global conservation efforts.

"While actual reasons are unknown, amongst the drivers there might be global changes in the climate, extreme environmental events (that are more frequent nowadays), and evolutionary mechanisms of the species," said Dr Kalashnikova.

Humpbacks migrate annually from summer feeding grounds near the poles to warmer winter breeding waters closer to the Equator.

He was then identified in a similar area in 2017 - and off Zanzibar in 2022.

The sightings are separated by a 13,046 km great-circle distance - the minimum distance for the route the whale might have taken, the scientists say, though it is likely to be much greater.



Mbarouk Mussa Omar, director of a community forests institution based on Zanzibar's Pemba Island, presents a solar pump to farmer Eshe Abdallah (L). It was during yesterday's issuance of water-distribution equipment to mixed-crop farmers on Uzi Island in South Unguja Region. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

Enakl secures \$1.4m to transform urban mobility across North Africa

By Special Correspondent

ENAKL, a Moroccan-French mobility start-up specialising in bus-sharing services, has successfully secured \$1.4 million in a pre-seed funding round.

The startup plans to utilise the funds to enhance its technology and expand its operations into additional cities across North Africa and the broader African continent.

The funding round was

spearheaded by Catalyst Fund and included contributions from Renew Capital, Digital Africa, Station F, and 15 angel investors.

"This funding allows us to deepen our impact in Casablanca, expand our reach, and accelerate the development of our technology," stated Samir Bennani, Enakl's co-founder and CEO.

Established in 2023 by Samir Bennani and Charles

Pommarede, Enakl provides a pre-planned commuting solution that enables users to book shared rides on mini-buses operating on fixed routes. The service is tailored to Morocco's urban centers, addressing the challenges of overcrowded buses and irregular schedules faced by daily commuters.

Enakl's bus-sharing business model aims to reduce the dependency of daily commuters on Morocco's public Bus Rapid

Transit (BRT) system, ultimately leading to fewer vehicles on the road. By addressing the need for sustainable and efficient public transportation in Morocco's rapidly expanding urban areas, the company is positioning itself as a transformative force in the mobility sector.

Casablanca, one of the busiest cities in the country, experiences significant commuter challenges, with the BRT system averaging wait times of 15 minutes

during peak hours. For commuters seeking faster and more reliable transportation, this poses a problem. Enakl's pre-planning feature offers a solution by ensuring timely pickups, helping commuters navigate the city more efficiently.

"We invested in Enakl because they're revolutionizing urban transit in Africa with a scalable, environmentally-friendly solution," said Maxime Bayen, Operating Partner at Catalyst Fund.

"By reducing emissions and congestion through tech-driven, shared transport, Enakl is addressing the challenges posed by urbanization."

In a market where Morocco's ride-sharing industry is still relatively small-valued at \$4.15 million in 2024—Enakl has a significant opportunity for growth. After just 14 months of operations, the startup reports managing over 15,000 ride bookings monthly, with this figure increas-

ing by 20% each month.

Despite its innovative approach, Enakl faces competition, not only from the public transport sector but also from ride-hailing companies like Careem and Heetch that are active in Morocco. However, while ride-hailing services cater to users seeking private trips, Enakl offers a cost-effective alternative, combining the affordability of public transit with the comfort of a private trip.

Illegal miners to appear in court in SA amid ongoing crackdown

JOHANNESBURG

A Total of 150 individuals arrested in Mpumalanga for engaging in illegal mining activities will appear in court this week.

Their arrests come as part of the country's heightened enforcement campaign, "Vala Umgodi," which translates to "close the holes." This operation aims to dismantle the illegal mining trade, a pervasive problem in many regions of South Africa.

Over the past year, more than 12,000 illegal miners have been apprehended nationwide, highlighting the scale of the issue. Authorities have been intensifying their crackdown, and this latest

operation is expected to send a strong message to those involved in the illicit industry.

On the weekend, six illegal miners were rescued from a collapsed shaft at the Stilfontein mine. The exact number of miners still trapped underground remains uncertain, though ongoing rescue efforts continue.

Since October, over 1,400 miners have been rescued from various mines in the Stilfontein area alone, with authorities finding bodies and pulling miners from hazardous conditions.

Among the miners rescued, a significant portion—more than 900—were identified as Mozambicans, with over 400 being Zimbabwean nationals.

Tragically, several bodies have been recovered during these operations, underscoring the deadly risks of illegal mining.

The situation has drawn attention to the exploitation of foreign miners who are often lured by promises of high rewards but end up working under dangerous and inhumane conditions.

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has expressed strong support for the crackdown, emphasizing the need to disrupt the supply chains that fuel the illegal mining industry. Authorities have sought to block access to necessary supplies like food, water, and equipment, hoping that these measures will force miners to leave the mines.



Xavier Daudi (R), acting Permanent Secretary in the President's Office (Public Service Management and Good Governance), briefs journalists in Dodoma city yesterday on a working meeting for heads of the Administration and Human Resource Management departments in ministries and autonomous departments lined up for December 17 and 18. Photo: Correspondent Ibrahim Joseph

Somalia and Ethiopia reach compromise over Somaliland port deal, Turkey says

ANKARA

ETHIOPIA and Somalia have agreed to hold "technical talks" to resolve a dispute sparked by Ethiopia's deal with Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland, according to a statement following talks in Turkey.

Turkey has been mediating between the two East African countries as tensions between them have simmered since Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland in January to lease land along its coastline to establish a marine force base. In return, Ethiopia would recognize Somaliland's independence, which Somalia says infringes on its sovereignty and territory.

A joint declaration was reached after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met separately with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday.

It says the sides agreed the talks, which would begin by February 2025 and conclude within four months, would respect Somalia's territorial integrity while recognizing "potential benefits" of Ethiopia's access to the sea.

The declaration also states that the sides would work to "finalize mutually advantageous commercial arrangements" that would allow Ethiopia "to enjoy reliable, secure and sustainable access to and from the sea, under the sovereign authority of the Federal Republic of Somalia."

Somaliland seceded from Somalia more than 30 years ago, but is not recognized by the African Union or the United Nations as an independent state. Somalia still considers Somaliland part of its territory. Over the years, Somaliland has built a stable political environment, contrasting sharply with Somalia's ongoing struggles with insecurity amid deadly attacks by al-Qaida-linked militant group al-Shabab. In November, Somaliland held a presidential election that gave a boost for its push for international recognition.

Healthcare equity, women's health spotlighted at ministers' conference

By Special Correspondent

THE International Health Ministerial Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda last week spotlighted critical issues surrounding health equity and women's health as central themes in the global healthcare agenda.

With a distinguished gathering of governmental officials, healthcare leaders, and corporate figures, the summit focused on addressing the urgent need for collaborative solutions to healthcare challenges.

Under the theme Strengthening Health Systems for a Better Tomorrow, discussions revolved around improving access to healthcare, driving innovation, and ensuring equitable healthcare systems worldwide.

Dr. Sabin Nsanjimana, Rwanda's Minister of Health, opened the summit by emphasizing that investing in health is not just essential but a fundamental human right. He highlighted Rwanda's 4x4 Reform, a strategy designed to quadruple the number of healthcare workers in the country to meet WHO recommendations, which reflects Rwanda's

commitment to building a resilient, inclusive health system. The summit's discussions underscored the importance of technological innovations such as AI in driving these efforts.

The initiative, he said, underscores Rwanda's commitment to building a resilient health system that ensures no one is left behind. Dr. Nsanjimana also stressed the role of innovations such as AI in building more resilient health systems.

The summit's first session focused on health equity, exploring the challenges and opportunities in transforming Africa's healthcare landscape.

Dr. Tim Keuri, CEO of the Kenya Health Federation, moderated a discussion about Africa's potential to become a global hub for pharmaceutical innovation and manufacturing. Industry leaders from the Unified Procurement Association, PharmaAccess, Pfizer, Bayer, and the Global One Health Institute shared insights on improving investment, regulatory frameworks, and strategic collaborations to strengthen Africa's pharmaceutical sector.



SHDEPHA+
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TENDER NOTICE FOR THE PRINTING OF TOOLS YEAR 2024/2025 SHDEPHA+, TANZANIA. TENDER NUMBER 02/FY2024-25/0002

Background
SHDEPHA+ is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1994 With Registration Number 00NGO/RI/00384, aiming at mobilizing resources and support communities Affected and Effected with HIV/AIDS to fight the spread of the Disease. SHDEPHA+ is currently implementing more than 07 projects in 11 Regions of Tanzania Mainland, the majority of which are USAID Funded and implemented in Rural areas covering 50 District and Municipal Councils. With respect to the current projects, SHDEPHA+ implements Health (TB, HIV/AIDS), Education, Gender based Violence, and Woman Empowerment Projects. SHDEPHA+ decentralized its set up by establishing 5 zones as follows: Central Zone (Singida & Dodoma Regions), Northern Zone (Arusha Region), Southern Zone (Mbeya Region), Lake Zone (Tabora, Simiyu, Mwanza, Geita, Shinyanga Regions) and Coastal Zone (Morogoro Region).

Kizazi HODARI project is a five-year, USAID-funded project that started its implementation on April 2022 and is planned to phase out in March 2027. The project is implemented by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) in 9 regions and 41 councils of Tanzania mainland.

SHDEPHA+ is awarded as sub-grantee to implement the project in Geita regions to all six (6) councils which are Geita TC, Geita DC, Mbogwe DC, Bukombe DC, Chato DC and Nyangwale DC.

SHDEPHA+ invites application from eligible, competent and qualified vendors/suppliers to apply for Printing enrolment forms and to support documentation of services provided to beneficiaries across Geita, Dodoma and Singida regions.:

The required quantities:

Region	Screening and enrollment (2 pages)	FCAA-HH (2 pages)	FCOA - OVC (2 pages)	HRAA 0-17 YRS (4pages)	HRAA 18+ (2 pages)	HRAQM (3pages)	Form# 2 (1page)	Form#1 (1page)	Care plan (1page)	GBV Screening - (2 pages)
Geita Region	2,497	3,497	2,497	4,994	3,497	187,632	120,210	2,497	23,454	5,994
Singida Region	1,210	3,210	1,210	2,420	3,210	46,504	35,070	1,210	5,813	4,420
Dodoma Region	2,026	3,026	2,026	4,052	3,026	59,168	58,030	2,026	7,396	5,052
Grand Total	5,733	9,733	5,733	11,466	9,733	283,304	213,310	5,733	36,663	15,466

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Interested suppliers are advised to include the following in their applications:

- Brief overview of the company and (Company Profile) including physical business address.
- Latest Business Registration Certificate or Certificate of Incorporation
- Copy of TIN and VAT registration certificates and valid tax Clearance (Tax Compliance Certificate) in Tanzania
- Valid Business licenses
- Current Audited financial statement for two consecutive years i.e. 2022 and 2023 (signed and stamped).
- Payment terms 100% after delivery
- Evidence of two LPO/Contracts of similar assignments for the last two years, and at least two (2) names and addresses of clients served.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Competitive Pricing.
- Financial capability.
- Company Experience.
- Sample.
- Delivery time.

Solicitation date: 13th December 2024.

The deadline for the submission of proposals is 1000hrs East Africa Time on 27th December 2024.

Question and clarification are due on 2nd December 2024 at 0500hrs East Africa Time through Email: at procurement@shdepha.org with the subject line "Request for Clarification".

Interested, eligible vendors should deliver physically their Proposal/quotation to SHEPHA+ KAHAMA. With the below address,

The Procurement Committee,
USAID Kizazi Hodari Northeastern Zone
ELCT Box 3033, Arusha,
Tanzania.

SHDEPHA+ will open all bids on 27th December 2024 at 1105hrs in the presence of the bidder's representatives who choose to attend. The present Bidders' representatives shall sign a register evidencing their attendance.

The terms of reference (TOR) for more details can also be accessed through (www.shdepha.org)



Country Programs & procurement Support – Tanzania

Location: Dar Es Salam, Tanzania
Job Reference: CPPS/PD/TZ/12/2024

AGRA and its Work to Transform Agriculture
AGRA is an African-led institution that actively supports the drive towards inclusive agricultural transformation and sustainable food systems. We do this by empowering the continent's 33 million smallholder farming households to transform their agriculture from a struggle to survive to profitable businesses. The continent's farmers regularly face challenges, and we aspire to provide uniquely African solutions that respond to their agricultural and environmental challenges, leading to increased harvests for reduced hunger and more income.

Working in alignment with the development priorities of our focus countries, we enable farmers to access improved and high-yielding seeds, gain knowledge on sustainable farming, and linkages to profitable markets. In our work, we aspire to build the alliances, partnerships, and networks required to drive an inclusive agricultural transformation. We work with our partners to create an equitable youth-friendly environment that harnesses the youth dividend on the continent to drive growth and facilitate open employment opportunities for young women and men. We achieve our key objectives through a focus on the following four areas of intervention:

- Policy and state capability - We support governments in creating an enabling environment for private sector involvement in agricultural transformation.
- Seed systems - We trigger higher productivity by increasing the availability and access to improved seeds by farmers allowing them to increase their harvests for food security and better incomes.
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We work with incredible people and partners who have roots in farming communities across the African continent combined with an inclusive, diverse, and talented workforce from over 25 nationalities. Our commitment to a call to action goes beyond ourselves as we arise to catalyze African Food Systems transformation and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

We are looking for people who are passionate about being part of a mission-driven team that is making a real difference on the continent; love to work on cutting edge Ag technologies; and able to grow their skills, expertise, and experience career growth, while enjoying very competitive compensation and benefits.

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The Position
Country Programs & Procurement Support – Tanzania Job Reference: CPPS/PD/TZ/12/2024

The Country Programs and Procurement Support will assist the country's administrative processes and ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) procedures. In liaison with the Human Resources Business Partners (HRBPs), s/he will ensure efficient onboarding and offboarding of staff and the implementation of employee engagement activities at country level. S/he will ensure all procurement activities shall be carried out in compliance with laid down policies, rules, and regulations, while enforcing transparency and accountability in the procurement process to ensure value for money.

Key Duties and Responsibilities:

- Lead AGRA's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliance as per the local labour laws in liaison with the Senior Administration Officer (Pan-African).
- Ensure procurement best practice is followed using the detailed guidelines provided in AGRA's Procurement Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Coordinate country procurements and ensure that the teams are adequately trained, vendors prequalified and overall compliance with procurement policy and procedures manual.
- Prepare country procurement plans in consultation with the country team and ensure that the plan is followed, including quarterly meetings with the Country team to update the plan.

Key Qualifications and Experience required:

- Essential**
 - Business degree in Administration, procurement/supply chain management or related disciplines
 - Familiarity with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, as well as understanding of standard contractual terms and conditions
- Desirable**
 - Experience working and supporting multicultural teams.
 - Experience with project and procurement planning
 - Fluency in English
 - Computer proficiency in: Word, Excel, Outlook, Internet search skills, PowerPoint and learn new applications
 - Experience working in a busy administration office and Managing procurement operations
- Technical Competencies**
 - Stakeholder Focus and Partnerships
 - Database management
 - Negotiation
 - Managing and Sharing Knowledge
- Behavioral Competencies**
 - Ability to drive collaboration through inclusive and agile teaming, breaking siloes, sharing information celebrating joint successes.
 - Ability to execute excellently by delivering high-quality work at speed, committing to decisions and plans, and increasing accountability to deliver impact at scale.
 - Ability to be sincerely constructive in interactions with others by demonstrating trust, sincerity, and care, in recognition of our joint purpose.
 - Ability to be increasingly entrepreneurial by breaking hierarchies, embracing learning and innovation to unlock the potential of diversity and ideas.

If you believe you are the right candidate for this position, kindly submit your application with a detailed CV (including your e-mail and telephone contacts) to recruit@agra.org. Please quote the job reference number in the subject line of the application e-mail.

Applications must be received on or before 30th December 2024. Due to the large volumes of applications, we usually receive, we will only be able to contact those candidates who are shortlisted.

For more information on the AGRA, visit www.agra.org.

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The Guardian

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FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER 2024

**Taking A New Look
At The News
ESTABLISHED IN 1995**

Vision 2050 needs transparency on its global methods, feasibility

HIGHLY placed authorities have been giving directives on what to do after the first draft of the 2050 Development Vision was launched in Zanzibar on Wednesday.

One of their demands is that various stakeholders be consulted to ensure that the gathering of public feedback is carried out thoroughly.

The overall wish is to put it beyond doubt that the final draft reflects the people's main aspirations. That is precisely where problems start, with precise expectations.

Those not familiar with planning, and that admittedly includes most of us, find it difficult to see the division of labour, so to speak, between the Planning Commission teams from the two sides of the Union, officialdom and the larger public.

Indeed, is a plan first put forward before stakeholders provide their inputs or, alternatively, are meetings called and inputs provided so as to start drawing up a vision?

It must be said that there is no clear view of what the vision primarily entails, or the proper mixture of the two aspects, if it should be seen as a plan.

Were it primarily a vision, it would seek more of strategic feedback or postulates, including holding public discussions on specific topics to get things clear.

The most important issues would evidently revolve around considerations such as growth, jobs, industry and governance, and it would be clearer what 'vision' we really have on this.

That is where a preliminary demerit of the current initiatives can be noticed, as vision needs to bring together political parties, university vice chancellors, leading civic organisations,

religious institutions or various other popular agencies organised by any of those stakeholders.

These would discuss whether multiparty democracy is working, and, if it isn't working to satisfaction, what can make it work.

Too bad, civil society had already boxed itself via a self-evident answer in the form of demands for a new Constitution as the cardinal agenda item.

While it can be debated how far a new Constitution is relevant to expectations on growth as well as peace and unity, the preliminary issue activists seldom raise is whether we have conditions for such arrangements.

They take up examples, unaware that each country has things it can easily do and those it can't. For example, Tanzania's government budget has usually been roughly two-thirds of its Kenyan equivalent, even with our higher population and wider territorial expanse that sets onerous infrastructure and other demands. Even from that angle alone, it is clear that the fiscal regimes are far from identical.

It is too early to say with any degree of precision or certainty what will be obtained through nationwide consultations on the plans, as any sector-based projections will scarcely say what sort of foreign investment inputs there will be in the years ahead.

It is an open question how much changes made or witnessed since 2021 relate to Vision 2025 and how much they owe their feasibility to the President's travels and ability to convince others into engaging with us. Hence the need for us all to focus on the most substantive issues, putting our main intents together.

Let's anchor empowering of youth in economic strategy, not in psychology

IT is hard to say how economic watchers gauge how the language of youth and individual engagement in economy has been changing over time.

There are two major aspects to this phenomenon, which needs to be limited to the past 30 years at most, as the reference points were considerably different earlier.

Those years saw many people naturally find work, till economic reform and the computer transition changed broad reality.

From then there was something like a working market for private initiative where most personal enterprise tended to yield results, even with a declining tendency later.

The past ten or so years have been more distressing in that regard, what with public expenditure overhauled and a sharp drop in recurrent expenditure noticed. That diminished much of the common or routine user goods and services that entrepreneurs were directing into markets.

Without the sort of earlier assurance that private effort would likely to succeed, the focus shifted to empowerment - where it is no longer the factual entities that youths raise that we were looking at but rather the youths' ability to do so.

In psychological terms, it was an effort to remove the burden of not caring - by assisting youths in discerning or ide notifying opportunities and where to use them.

This way, public rallies and other platforms would be well attended and characterised by positive feelings in that regard.

Not much work is being done all this while on the core issues, such as to how relative full employment can be assured in a country, as so many countries around the world have at times experienced a labour shortage.

This touched off migratory waves from Africa, South America and Western Asia in part due to conflicts but more largely attracted by assured job openings. The issue here is: why can't we do the same if we have the land, skills?

That is why this theme is permanently at centre stage, and of late youths from various parts in the country are supposed to have been equipped with skills to enhance effective leadership and promote peaceful coexistence within communities.

There was some exaggeration in that assertion, as is often the case in youth-related training stints - that each of those instances prefers to immerse itself in a completion mood so that they can now go forward.

The demand shortage remains intact, while habitual question marks about how far state agencies can solve youth unemployment are still there, etc. If anything, these engagements provide a break from the depression the youth would otherwise be condemned to live with, but saying that it is a solution would be overdrive.

This situation has impacted even the language and the psychology of public engagements, including that being clever is to have what it takes to be noticed by someone and getting errands to do from time to time.

There is at times contempt about creating such niches, it often works and one becomes a proper service provider.

In art, literature, broadcasting, etc., though, this leads to a culture of going easy, taking big things lightly lest some people feel offended and appear genial but avoiding anything that leads to controversy. In a word, no clear answers exist.

The Guardian Limited Key Contacts

MANAGING EDITOR: WALLACE MAUGGO
CIRCULATION MANAGER: DENNIS NTAITA
feedback@guardian.co.tz

Newsdesk

General Line: 0745 700710
News Editor: LUSEKELO PHILEMON
0757 154767
E-mail: guardian@guardian.co.tz

Advertising

Cel: + 0677 020701 E-mails: Advertise@guardian.co.tz
Website: Ippmedia.com, epaper.ippmedia.com



Nature can help Africa make the most of COP29 outcomes

By Ademola Ajagbe

Despite mixed reactions to the outcomes of COP29, Africa has the opportunity to take the lead in harnessing nature to tackle the effects of climate change and secure a resilient future.

As countries craft climate plans for tapping into the secured goal of US\$300 billion in carbon finance annually by 2035, nature has to be at the core. Integrating nature-based solutions into national climate strategies will ensure that ecosystems thrive while contributing to economic and social resilience.

This benefits nature and communities, in the continent, and the rest of the world. With its vast natural wealth, the growing appreciation of the intersection of climate change, biodiversity loss, and development grants the continent the mantle.

Nature has the potential to contribute about a third of the cost-effective climate solutions needed to deliver global climate goals.

This will enable the continent that is currently among the most vulnerable to effects of climate change to effectively tackle impacts of climate change and enhance resilience.

From prolonged droughts in the Horn of Africa to catastrophic flooding in Southern Africa, communities are on the frontlines of climate disaster yet often depend on healthy ecosystems for their livelihoods and well-being.

Nature-based solutions can bridge the gap between conserving biodiversity and delivering climate goals. Reforestation, restoration of coastal wetlands and mangroves, coral reef protection, clean energy generation and regenerative farming are all pathways for enhancing climate resilience while bolstering food security, water availability, and economic development.

Africa can leapfrog to clean energy, for instance, reducing emissions while expanding access to affordable electricity. While parts of the continent rely on fossil fuel revenues, the economic and environmental benefits of accelerating adoption of renewables are clear.

It is laudable that several African countries have signed to the goal of tripling renewable energy by 2030, as part of their national climate commitments.

For African nations, financing remains one of the biggest hurdles for scaling these climate actions. Closing the finance gap is essential if we are to attain the ambitious climate targets for substantial allocations to nature-positive projects and developing sustainable infrastructure.

African countries can leverage innovative financial instruments, such as green bonds and blended finance models, to



Africa can leapfrog to clean energy, reducing emissions while expanding access to affordable electricity. Credit: Isaiha Espisú/IPS

unlock private sector investment in nature-based solutions. By doing so, we can drive economic growth while protecting our natural heritage.

Carbon markets present a significant opportunity. Without protecting and restoring nature at scale, it is impossible to meet global climate goals.

These natural assets store carbon, provide livelihoods for millions of people, and can channel revenue from global markets into local conservation and development initiatives.

Natural climate solutions, like reforestation, stopping deforestation, and improving management of grasslands, constitute almost 50 per cent of today's supply of carbon credits, with much room for growth.

The newly secured consensus at COP29 is expected to fully unleash the financial and nature-positive power of well-regulated carbon markets by protecting Africa's carbon-rich ecosystems.

There is a clear path forward for others to emulate from pioneering efforts like Gabon's innovative finan-

cial transaction, in the form of a blue bond to refinance US\$500 million of its national debt and generate up to US\$163 million in new funding for ocean conservation.

The continent has the opportunity to make nature a foundational pillar in all climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Investments in ecosystem restoration and sustainable land use can help safeguard rural communities from extreme weather events, reduce the risks of climate-induced displacement, and protect vital ecosystems that underpin Africa's economy.

Fundamentally, the goal must be promoting evidence-based solutions that solve real climate challenges while reducing emissions, supporting local organizations and grassroots advocacy, and raising local awareness to create better understanding of sustainability practices.

The future of Africa's development is tied to how its natural resources are managed in the face of climate change. Given its abundant natural

resources, Africa requires the necessary investments in its energy sector easily serving as a template for successful clean energy.

The continent holds the solutions the world needs, from rich biodiversity to vast renewable energy potential. It is time to harness these strengths, ensuring that nature is at the heart of climate strategies. By doing so, we can secure a future where Africa not only survives but thrives.



It is laudable that several African countries have signed to the goal of tripling renewable energy by 2030, as part of their national climate commitments

By Telesphor Magobe

New evidence-based report shows deterioration in Africa's civic space



A new report titled "People Power Under Attack 2024" published this month by CIVICUS Monitor says only 40 out of 198 surveyed countries and territories (20.20 per cent) enjoy open civic space, indicating widespread respect for civic freedoms.

In this report civic space is defined as "respect for policy, law and practice for freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and the extent to which the state protects these fundamental rights."

CIVICUS Monitor, which is based in Johannesburg, is a global civil society alliance of over 20 research partner organisations which tracks and assesses the state of civic space worldwide and offers insights into civic space developments.

Each country or territory's civic space is rated in one of the five categories: open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed and closed in relation to freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, and the state's duty to protect these fundamental freedoms.

The report, which covers November 1, 2023 to October 31, 2024, shows it has identified over 2,500 incidents of civic freedoms violations. It shows that while conditions for civil society have deteriorated in nine countries, namely Burkina Faso, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kenya, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Palestine and Peru, they improved in nine other countries, namely Bangladesh, Botswana, Fiji, Japan, Jamaica, Liberia, Poland, Slovenia and Trinidad and Tobago.

At least 81 countries and territories are rated in the worst two categories of repressed and closed civic space, indicating widespread and routine repression of fundamental freedoms.

"Some 72.4 per cent of the global population lives under these repressive conditions. Almost 30 per cent of the population lives in countries where civic space is completely closed. Compared with last year, an additional 1.5 percentage points of the global population now lives in a repressed or closed country."

In 2023, there were 28 countries and territories with closed civic space, 50 with repressed civic space and 40 with obstructed civic space, meaning that 118 of 198 countries and territories (about 60 per cent) were experiencing severe restrictions in fundamental freedoms. However, 43 countries had narrowed civic space and just 37 had open civic space.

"The severity of the civic space deterioration is exemplified by the number of countries moving to the repressed or closed category. Of the seven countries being downgraded, five moved to the two worst categories. Bangladesh and Venezuela are now rated as closed and Kyrgyzstan, Senegal and Sri Lanka are downgraded to the repressed rating as conditions for civil society continue to worsen," the report says.

However, this year four countries, namely Japan, Jamaica, Slovenia and Trinidad and Tobago have moved into the highest category of open civic space. According to CIVICUS Monitor, over the past year, over 1,100 violations (45 per cent) were related to freedom of expression. "Violations of freedoms of peaceful assembly made up 29 per cent of the total, and freedom of association violations constituted 26 per cent."

In some countries and territories citizens were able to stage peaceful demonstrations, but in others the demonstrations were disrupted, prevented or dispersed by law enforcers using excessive force. "In 2024, protests to show solidarity with Palestinians and climate change and environmental protests were particularly targeted, including through bans, disruption of protests and arrests of protesters, among other tactics to discourage people from gather-

ing to have their voices heard."

In sub-Saharan Africa some peaceful demonstrators were arrested. In Nigeria, at least 1,700 demonstrators were arrested from August 1-10, 2024. In Accra, Ghana, 53 demonstrators were arrested as they staged a demonstration against worsening economic conditions and government mismanagement in September 2024. In Kenya 1,200 demonstrators opposing tax rise were arrested in June 2024.

Thus, according to CIVICUS Monitor, civic space conditions in sub-Saharan Africa remain repressive. At least 43 of 50 countries have obstructed, repressed or closed civic space. Over half of countries, about 70 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa, are rated as repressed. However, civic space is open only in the island states of Cabo Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe, while Mauritius, Namib-

ia and Seychelles have narrowed civic space, now joined by Botswana and Liberia. While civic space conditions have improved in Botswana and Liberia, they have deteriorated in Burkina Faso, Eswatini, Ethiopia and Kenya, according to the report.

At global level, disruption of peaceful demonstrations was documented in at least 53 countries. In at least 41 countries and territories excessive force was used against peaceful demonstrators and some of them were killed in Bangladesh, Guinea, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan.

The report highlights top 10 global violations, namely detention of peaceful demonstrators, attacks on journalists, detention of human rights defenders, detention of journalists, disruption of peaceful demonstrations, excessive use of force, censorship, prosecution of human rights defenders, killing of human rights defenders and criminal defamation.

The report says repression of democracy activists and political opposition has escalated, particularly during elections, endangering activists and undermining democratic freedoms. It says in several countries, there was the use of violent repression, including killings, disappearances and torture to create a chilling atmosphere and silence dissenting voices. Opposition political leaders, members, and their supporters are subjected to threats and prosecutions.

In various parts of the world, even in the face of repression, civil society continues showing remarkable resilience, achieving significant victories and progress in securing civic freedoms. "The victories span from countries with the most repressed civic space conditions - showing the crucial role of civil society even in harsh environments - to those that broadly respect civic freedoms. Pressure from civil society has resulted in oppressive bills being withdrawn, historical and decades-long injustices being addressed and unjust detention and court rulings being overturned."

Since 2018 to date CIVICUS Monitor has rated Tanzania in the category of repressed civic space. To Tanzania and other countries and territories, CIVICUS Monitor recommends ensuring freedom of expression is safeguarded in all forms by bringing all national legislation into line with international law and standards and refrain from censoring conventional and social media. It also recommends that any restrictions are subjected to oversight by an independent and impartial judicial authority and in accordance with due process and standards of legality, necessity and legitimacy.

Tanzania must integrate poverty alleviation, climate action in the next phase of TASAF

By Correspondent Frank Abel

TANZANIA'S steadfast dedication to combating poverty has earned global recognition, with the World Bank recently praising the country's exemplary performance in implementing the Productive Social Safety Net Program under the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF).

The successful outcomes of the previous phases have not only transformed the lives of countless vulnerable households but have also positioned Tanzania as a leader in poverty alleviation. This acknowledgment sets the stage for the upcoming phase of TASAF, which presents a unique opportunity to build on these achievements while integrating climate action and long-term sustainability.

TASAF has been at the heart of the country's efforts to reduce poverty and foster inclusive development. Through community-driven initiatives and targeted programmes, TASAF has made significant strides in improving access to essential services while supporting local economic growth.

Despite its successes, TASAF has faced challenges that provide critical lessons for future initiatives. This article explores both the achievements and obstacles of TASAF, emphasizing the importance of incorporating climate action and long-term sustainability into the next phase of the program.

Key achievements

One of the standout accomplishments of TASAF has been its direct impact on poverty reduction. Through carefully coordinated programmes, TASAF has reached over 1.9 million people across various districts, improving access to vital social and economic services.

These services included the construction of infrastructure such as schools and health centers, as well as initiatives that enhanced local development and economic opportunities. By addressing basic needs and providing essential infrastructure, TASAF laid the groundwork for long-term community progress.

Community empowerment has also been a cornerstone of TASAF's success. The program's participatory approach enabled communities to identify their specific needs and manage development projects. This strategy not only fostered local ownership but also encouraged accountability, transforming communities from passive recipients into active contributors. This sense of responsibility was vital for the long-term sustainability of the projects and created a culture of collaboration.

Investing in vulnerable groups through targeted financial support has also been a significant achievement. The introduction of conditional cash transfers allowed households in need to meet immediate necessities, such as food, healthcare, and education, while providing opportunities for economic growth. These investments helped uplift vulnerable communities and generated a ripple effect of positive change across Tanzania.

Despite its numerous successes, TASAF has faced several challenges that must be addressed in future phases of the program. One major obstacle has been the limited capacity of local governments.

Insufficient infrastructure, lack of skilled personnel and inadequate resource allocation often hindered the timely and effective execution of projects. These capacity constraints led to delays and inefficiencies, limiting the overall impact of



the program in some areas.

Sustainability has been another critical challenge. Many of TASAF's initiatives have been heavily reliant on external funding, raising concerns about the long-term viability of the projects once donor support concludes. Local governments often struggled to maintain the benefits of TASAF programs, underscoring the need for better sustainability planning. To ensure lasting impact, future programs must focus on building local government capacities and developing self-sustaining models that can continue beyond the duration of donor-driven interventions.

Another challenge lies in the inconsistent implementation of projects across regions. As TASAF expanded, disparities in local government capabilities became evident, leading to uneven outcomes. Some regions benefited more than others, and the lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms made it difficult to assess the overall effectiveness of the program. This inconsistency highlights the importance of tailored support for regions with varying levels of capacity.

Integrating climate action and poverty alleviation efforts

Looking ahead to the next phase of TASAF, it is crucial to integrate poverty alleviation efforts with climate change adaptation strategies. Tanzania, like many countries, faces the growing threat of climate change, which exacerbates poverty and deepens inequalities.

Climate change impacts, such as droughts, floods, and rising temperatures, disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities, making it essential for future development programs to consider environmental factors alongside socio-economic needs. TASAF's next phase should prioritize

climate-resilient projects that support sustainable agriculture, renewable energy solutions, and disaster preparedness. By incorporating climate action into poverty alleviation efforts, TASAF can help communities adapt to climate change while fostering economic growth and social development.

Additionally, integrating climate considerations into local development planning will contribute to the long-term sustainability of projects and ensure that communities are better equipped to withstand future environmental challenges.

Building on the successes and lessons of previous phases, Tanzania's next step should also focus on strengthening the capacity of local governments. Empowering local authorities with the resources, skills, and support needed to manage development projects effectively is essential for ensuring the sustainability of poverty reduction programs. This should include investing in training, infrastructure, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that projects are executed efficiently and equitably across all regions.

The integration of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be critical for assessing the impact of future initiatives. Regular assessments will help identify areas for improvement, ensure accountability, and provide valuable data to guide future policy decisions. By embracing a data-driven approach, TASAF can optimize its resources and improve the effectiveness of its programs.

Tanzania's TASAF programme has made significant strides in reducing poverty and empowering communities. However, the challenges faced along the way provide important lessons for the next phase of the pro-

gramme.

Key recommendations

Tanzania's experience with TASAF has been both transformative and instructive, significantly contributing to poverty reduction and community empowerment while revealing areas for improvement. As the country prepares for the next phase of TASAF, it is essential to build on these lessons, address existing challenges, and integrate climate action to ensure sustainability and resilience. The Minister of Finance's commitment to aligning TASAF with the Tanzania Vision 2050 is a positive step toward harmonizing poverty alleviation efforts with broader national development goals. To strengthen this alignment, the next phase of TASAF should focus on advancing economic and social development while integrating climate resilience.

To maximize TASAF's impact, the next phase should more closely align with national and international development initiatives across sectors such as agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure. By integrating TASAF with these sector-specific programmes, Tanzania can create a more holistic approach to development, ensuring that beneficiaries receive services that promote their overall well-being.

Collaboration with climate-focused programmes and agencies will help incorporate climate-resilient practices into poverty alleviation strategies, ensuring that TASAF's efforts remain sustainable in the face of environmental challenges.

As climate change increasingly threatens vulnerable communities, it is crucial that the next phase of TASAF integrates climate adaptation and resilience measures. The next phase should introduce training on sustainable farming practices, water conservation, and renewable energy solutions. Empowering beneficiaries with these tools will help them adapt to environmental shifts, improving both their immediate livelihoods and long-term economic stability. By focusing on climate resilience, TASAF can reduce communities' dependence on external aid and enhance their self-sufficiency.

Enhancing capacity building at the local level

A key lesson from previous phases of TASAF is that the success of the program hinges on the capacity of local governments. The next phase should prioritize building local government capacity through extensive training programs.

These programmes should focus on project management, technical skills for implementation, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure efficient service delivery. Strengthening the skills and resources of local authorities will en-

able them to manage projects more effectively, reduce inconsistencies, and ensure the sustainability of initiatives long after TASAF's direct involvement ends.

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is critical for assessing the impact and effectiveness of TASAF's programs. The next phase should prioritize the creation of comprehensive M&E frameworks that can track project progress, measure impact, and provide real-time feedback for continuous improvement. These systems should capture climate-related data to evaluate how well the program adapts to and mitigates the impacts of climate change. By strengthening M&E mechanisms, TASAF can ensure transparency, improve accountability, and make data-driven decisions that optimize its impact.

Community participation has been a central success factor in past phases of TASAF, and this approach should be expanded in the next phase. Integrating climate action into local development plans will foster greater ownership and ensure that solutions are tailored to the specific needs and capacities of communities.

Securing sustainable funding models

Past reliance on external funding has posed challenges for the long-term sustainability of TASAF programmes. To address this, the next phase should explore diverse funding models, including public-private partnerships and climate finance initiatives, to reduce dependence on donor support.

Collaborations with international and local organizations that focus on climate change and economic empowerment can bring in additional resources, expertise, and innovative solutions that support long-term project sustainability. A more diversified funding approach will help secure TASAF's financial stability and ensure that projects continue to benefit communities in the long run. As Tanzania moves forward with TASAF, it must recognize that poverty and climate change are deeply interconnected challenges. Poverty often exacerbates vulnerability to climate impacts, while climate change can deepen poverty by disrupting livelihoods, food security, and access to resources.

Tackling both issues together is essential to breaking this vicious cycle and creating lasting improvements. By addressing poverty and climate change in tandem, the next phase of TASAF can uplift vulnerable communities, build resilience, and set a global precedent for effectively combating both issues.

Frank Abel is a Senior Programme Accountant at Amref Health Africa Tanzania and one of the stakeholders of sustainable development with more focus on the effects of climate change. He can be reached via +255 753 732 355.

By He Yin

UNESCO inscribes Spring Festival on intangible cultural heritage list, promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations

ON December 4, Spring Festival, social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of the traditional new year, was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The announcement was made during the 19th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Asuncion, Paraguay. At the session, vivid displays of cultural elements related to the Spring Festival, such as couplets, dragon dance, and Chinese knots, accompanied by melodies full of Spring Festival flavor, brought the festival's rich traditions to life.

The successful inscription highlights the growing global appeal of traditional Chinese culture and the values embedded in Chinese civilization.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out, the Chinese New Year's Eve and Spring Festival are traditional festivals of the Chinese nation and days for families to reunite and ring in the Lunar New Year. He underscored the importance of this traditional festival in Chinese culture.

The Spring Festival represents the unique cultural and emotional DNA of the Chinese people. It is the most influential among all traditional Chinese festivals due to its profound cultural significance, rich customs, and widespread participation.

The festival plays an important role in maintaining and strengthening the emotional bonds between individuals, families, and the nation, while also promoting core values at the heart of Chinese civilization, such as peace, concord, and harmony. It stands as a powerful reminder of humanity's shared values, including family harmony, social inclusiveness, and the harmonious co-existence of humanity and nature, contributing greatly to the continuity of Chinese civilization.

The world's cultural and natural heritage is an important outcome of the development of human civilization and natural evolution, and an important vehicle for the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

The Spring Festival embodies peace, amity and harmony which are values cherished by the Chinese nation and Chinese civilization, making it a festival that is meaningful for China and can be enjoyed by the world.

In 2023, China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism initiated the campaign to apply for UNESCO's recognition of the Spring Festival. In August of the same year, Spring



International teachers with Kang Chiao International School in Kunshan city, east China's Jiangsu province, learn to make dumplings with their families to celebrate the upcoming Spring Festival, February 7, 2024. (Photo by Yuan Xinyu /People's Daily Online)

Festival, social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of the traditional new year, became the only Chinese application for UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2024.

The application includes a wide array of Spring Festival traditions across the country, such as pasting Spring Festival couplets, displaying

New Year paintings, eating steamed bun with colorful patterns, and visiting temple fairs.

The recognition by UNESCO underscores China's commitment to strengthening the protection, preservation, and utilization of cultural and natural heritage. It has positive significance for the building of Chinese modernization that features material and cultural-ethical ad-

vancement, and adds new luster to world civilizations.

Nancy Ovelar de Gorostiaga, Paraguay's permanent representative to UNESCO and chair of the meeting, congratulated China on the successful inscription. She said that China is the example that many countries should follow in order to try to safeguard their heritage, culture and traditions.

The successful inscription also represents a practical step in China's commitment to implementing the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) and promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. It will substantially foster harmonious coexistence among civilizations and increase understanding and friendship among peoples.

Starting from 2024, the Spring Festival has been officially listed as a UN floating holiday in its calendar of conferences and meetings; it is a public holiday in almost 20 countries and celebrated in various ways by about one-fifth of humanity.

Besides, Happy Spring Festival activities and other cultural events hosted by China to celebrate the festival have reached nearly 200 countries and regions. UN Secretary-General has extended Spring Festival greetings on many occasions, and dignitaries of many countries have joined Spring Festival celebrations.

This traditional Chinese festival has become a widely accepted, recognized, and appreciated symbol of Chinese culture. People across the world share the joy and festive vibe while experiencing the vibrancy and inclusiveness of Chinese culture during Spring Festival celebrations.

UNESCO's recognition will help more people worldwide learn about the festival and the values it embodies, building a bridge for exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations.

Cultural heritage is a global treasure that belongs to all of humanity. China will take the successful inclusion of the Spring Festival on the UNESCO list as a new starting point to better protect and carry forward the cultural values and essence inherent in the Spring Festival. In this way, the Chinese civilization, together with the rich and colorful civilizations created by the peoples of other countries, will provide humanity with the right cultural guidance and strong motivation.

People's Daily

COP29: Advancing work for climate finance and for climate-adapted agri-food systems

GENEVA

FRUSTRATIONS over the pace of climate action and the size of the finance target agreed in Baku are valid from the perspective of low-income countries, especially Small-Island Developing States (SIDS). It is also important to recognize that there has been real progress in some countries at the agri-food-nutrition-climate-water-nature-livelihoods intersection, and this seems to be particularly the case in some countries in the Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation (ACF).

The finance negotiations at COP29: Climate negotiations become harder as the stakes get higher. The focus of COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan was on climate finance. The intention was to increase the target for finance to go to developing countries to help them protect

their people and economies against climate disasters and invest into clean energy. This would come in the form of a new goal for global climate finance. Negotiating a finance goal was never going to be straightforward. It is challenging for nations to agree an amount that is fair for everyone and, at the same time, politically feasible for those that are asked to provide the cash. The last hours of COP29 in Baku were difficult and many participants felt dissatisfied when they left.

Solid floor on which to build: But the outcome - a new global goal of \$1.3 trillion annually by 2035, from public, private and innovative sources, with developed nations committing \$300 billion per year - is a real increase on the previous target of \$100bn a year. It is a solid floor on which to build. Is the amount big enough? Will it be made available to those who need

it soon enough? I cannot say at this stage. Securing a sustainable future for all requires continued goodwill, engagement and collaboration. This is only possible if all concerned ensure the transparent provision, effective delivery and efficient use of promised funds. This will pave the way for greater confidence among donors and further increases in available resources.

Growing momentum on the agri-food-nutrition-climate + intersection: I sensed a greater recognition that those who produce food are affected first, and worst, by climate change, and that the numbers of people at risk of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition are on the rise with the most affected being women and children. Agri-food systems contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions while, at the same time, having the potential to sequester carbon dioxide. That makes them quite spe-

cial within climate discussions though - for now - it appears hard to bring them into the negotiations.

What is the basis for this? The contacts I have had with national food systems convenors and climate focal points, during the last two years, suggest that several governments are seeking ways to transform food systems in ways that converge their agri-food systems with climate action. They do this in ways that reflect the aspirations in the COP28 UAE declaration on Sustainable agriculture, Resilient food systems and Climate action endorsed by 160 Heads of Government last year. Some countries have come together in an ambitious Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation. There is backing available through different entities in the UN system, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, the Technical Cooperation Col-

laborative, the COP29 Baku Harmoniya Climate Initiative for Farmers, as well as different elements of a wide ecosystem of support which is constantly inspired by the Climate Champions, regional organizations and more. There is a lot of effort being invested in streamlining and connecting these efforts.

Younger people: In COP29 there was greater engagement of younger people who were systematically welcomed and actively engaged in many events. With their consistent focus on inclusion, governance, and accountability, their participation greatly adds to the ambition and potential impact of the different processes underway.

A will to work together: COP29 was a massive and complex event involving around 60,000 people from nearly 200 countries. I saw how the different groups that were there engaged in constructive ways and I appreciated the contributions

of the organizers, volunteers, participants of all ages (especially younger people), governments, local authorities, farmers, advocates, businesses, civil society, media, and others. Despite their different perspectives they engaged in constructive dialogue, all are working for sustainable and just futures.

The work on food and agriculture advances well and all those I met in Baku were doing their best to work together harmoniously. Many wanted greater ambition. Some are acutely frustrated because they fear for their future and sense underlying injustice.

Not all agree on what to prioritize. But overall, though, I sense remarkable momentum which is paving the way for more substantive action even if the international geopolitical context is very difficult.

Looking ahead: Climate change is an exponential

and existential challenge with increasingly severe consequences for many millions of people.

The work ahead is immense and increasingly ambitious and innovative actions will be required. The journey ahead requires skilfully chosen investments that foster convergent ways of working: these will be needed more than ever in the years to come. Going further and faster requires everyone to focus on maintaining connections, fostering dialogue, nurturing respect, sharing energy and sustaining trust.

The interactions in Baku showed me what might be possible, and I am impatient for more. Our 4SD Foundation will continue to contribute with its focus on sustaining cross-sector, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder convergence through structured dialogues.

IPS

CAPITAL RADIO

RATIBA YA VIPINDI JUMATATU - JUMAPILI

MONDAY TIME PROGRAMME	TUESDAY TIME PROGRAMME	WEDNESDAY TIME PROGRAMME	THURSDAY TIME PROGRAMME	FRIDAY TIME PROGRAMME	SATURDAY TIME PROGRAMME	SUNDAY TIME PROGRAMME
05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM 09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA 13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101 16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA 18:00-18:10HRS HABARI 18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME 20:00-21:00HRS HALI HALISI 21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM 09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA 13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101 16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA 18:00-18:10HRS HABARI 18:10-21:00HRS BOZOUK TIME 21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM 09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA 13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101 16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA 18:00-18:10HRS HABARI 18:10-21:00HRS BOZOUK TIME 21:00-22:00HRS SPORTS 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM 09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA 13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101 16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA 18:00-18:10HRS HABARI 18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME 20:00-21:00HRS SPORTS 21:00-23:00HRS MALUMBANO YA HOJA 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	05:00-09:00HRS MORNING JAM 09:00-13:00HRS LETE RAHA 13:00-14:00HRS DW-RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CLUB 101 16:00-18:00HRS DALA DALA 18:00-18:10HRS HABARI 18:10-20:00HRS BOZOUK TIME 20:00-21:00HRS SPORTS 21:00-23:00HRS KIPIMA JOTO 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	07:30-10:00HRS DK 90 DUNIANI 10:00-11:00HRS KADOGO 11:00-13:00HRS BONGO HITS 13:00-14:00HRS DW RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS ZAIDI YA UMJUAVYO 16:00-18:00HRS ALIYEVUMA 18:00-21:00HRS BUZUKI TIME 21:00-22:00HRS SPOTI 22:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)	07:00-09:00HRS HABARI NA MATUKIO YA WIKI 09:00-11:00HRS THE SUNDAY 11:00-13:00HRS TOP 20 13:00-14:00HRS DW RADIO 14:00-16:00HRS CAPITAL MICHEZONI 16:00-18:00HRS UKURASA WA MBELE 18:00-21:00HRS JIACHIE 21:00-22:00HRS SPOTI 22:00-01:00HRS LADHA LAINI 01:00-05:00HRS MUZIKI MCHAGANGANYIKO)

Tembelea mitandao ya kijamii ya CAPITAL RADIO



CAPITAL RADIO

Food banks gain popularity as Nigerians grapple with high living costs, volunteers

LAGOS

At the Lagos Food Bank, volunteers are busy packing boxes of essential supplies for some of the city's poorest communities.

Nigeria's population of over 210 million people – Africa's largest – is also among the hungriest in the world.

The current economic hardship under President Bola Tinubu is blamed on surging inflation that was at a 28-year high of 33.8 per cent in October and the government's economic policies that have pushed the local currency to record low against the dollar.

With over 30 million Nigerians facing acute hunger, according to the United Nations, food banks – previously uncommon in Nigeria – have become a vital and welcome lifeline.

The Lagos Food Bank initiative focuses on providing food to vulnerable communities, like this one on the outskirts of the city.

The people here wish they didn't have to rely on handouts, but are appreciative nonetheless.

"Life used to be good. We were able to make profits from business and also afford to pay fees for the kids before everything got worse. As a trader, business was good, and we never thought about the food bank and didn't even know about it. But when life became so difficult and we couldn't make ends meet, eating was a big problem," says widow Anike Adeshina.

"We are not happy seeking this assistance, but we are helpless. There's the issue of house rent; I am a widow, my children have no job, and those into business don't have sales. There is no profit because the country is upside down, and if not for all this (food banks),

I won't be here," she continues.

The vast increases in the cost of living have left many in the community facing hunger.

"We are affected by the economy because if you manage to eat in the morning, it might be eba (cassava jam) with vegetable soup without any form of protein. There's no other food unless there's a miracle," explains Adeshina.

"And if children become very hungry, they manage the leftovers, and we don't ask if children are satisfied because there's nothing we can do," she says.

Omotola Gbolabo is another community member who is thankful for the food bank.

Without it, her children would go hungry.

"The Christmases we had in previous years have been good, but this year's Christmas, there's nothing to eat. We cannot afford to cook rice, we can't afford noodles, we can't have fried eggs," she says.

"My children don't have enough to eat; we only eat what we can afford, and sometimes we eat boiled corn, drink water, and go to bed. So, that's how we've been living for now."

The Lagos Food Bank was founded by Michael Sunbola.

"A recent report by WFP (World Food Programme) says that more than 70 per cent of our population can barely afford a healthy diet. Prices of food have gone really high. Food inflation is almost 40 per cent. So with all of this in place, more people, of course, will seek reliefs," says Sunbola.

The food bank launched in 2016, but demand for its services has boomed in recent years.

"We've had to increase our



Residents of Oworonshoki slum gesture after receiving food distributed by the Lagos Food Bank Initiative, in Lagos, Nigeria.

budgets. At times, we've even had to cut the sizes of food we give in order for us to reach more people," says Sunbola.

The Lagos Food Bank relies on the work of volunteers who are committed to the needs of the most vulnerable in society.

"Our work is very important and is a constant reminder that we need to make our world a better place. We need to stretch our hands to our neighbours. We, there are people who don't know where their next meal will come from," says Sunbola.

"There are families who have not eaten since yesterday, they're there in our com-

munity, they're there in our society. And what food bank does is to foster that element of hope."

The food bank launched in 2016, but demand for its services has boomed in recent years.

In addition to feeding the poor, the food bank is also committed to reducing waste.

"A whole lot of food that's produced in our farms goes to waste due to storage issues and, all kinds of infrastructural challenges. As a result, we decided to establish the Lagos Food Bank," Sunbola says.

The initiative was also born out of Sunbola's personal experience.

"I had a share food insecurity growing up. I'm able to connect with some of the challenges that this, our clients, our beneficiaries are facing. And then there stems the passion to ensure that we're able to close this food gap, hunger gap," he says.

President Tinubu's economic reforms in Nigeria, such as the suspension of decades long and costly gas subsidies, were supposed to save the government money and shore up dwindling foreign investments.

However, their poor implementation has had a knock-on effect on the price of just about everything else, analysts say, pointing especially to the absence of adequate and timely support programmes.

Scientists use new technology and AI to discover animal intelligence

By Special Correspondent

With advanced technology and the help of AI, scientists are increasingly discovering proof that many animals are much smarter than previously thought.

From self-medicating great apes to elephants that call one another by individual names, the wonderful world of nature was full of fascinating discoveries throughout 2024.

In June, biologists from Colorado State University in the United States published a paper suggesting African elephants respond to individual names.

These unique names are in the form of complex low rumbles that can be heard over long distances across the savannah.

They used machine learning to detect the use of names in recordings made in Kenya's Samburu National Reserve and Amboseli National Park.

The biologists then tested their results by playing them back to individual elephants, who responded

more energetically, flapping their ears and lifting their trunks, to those that contained their name.

"Elephants do these really interesting behaviours where sometimes when they're in a big group of females or a mate check of a group will give a call. The entire group will respond, they'll group up around her or they'll follow her," said co-author George Wittemyer.

"Then at other times, she gives seemingly a very similar call and nobody will respond, nobody will react, except for a single elephant. So that indicates that they have a means by which to communicate to who they want to talk to."

But elephants are not the only ones. Scientists have long known that marine animals communicate underwater, including the songs sung by humpback whales and whistles used by dolphins.

But this year, researchers studying sperm whales in the Caribbean said they believe their set of clicks could make up a sort of "phonetic alphabet" that they can use



to build the rough equivalent of what people think of as words and phrases.

In addition to commu-

nication using sound, researchers at Italy's University of Pisa and University of Turin in a separate study

discovered that bottlenose dolphins "smile" at one another to communicate during play.

Everyone knows chimps are clever. But research from the University of Oxford released this year

points to them having a sophisticated medicinal culture, seeking out plants with strong anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory effects. The study followed two chimp communities over several months, tracking sick animals and the plants they searched for.

Out of the wild, many dog owners have the sense that their pets understand human language more than just simple commands.

They do not only respond to verbal cues like "sit" and "stay," but also ones that refer to their favourite toys, the car, and even the bath.

But science has had trouble determining whether dogs genuinely activate a mental image when they hear the name of an object, something that would suggest a deeper grasp of language similar to that possessed by humans.

In March this year, a study in Hungary found that dogs can learn to associate words with specific objects - a relationship with language called referential understanding that had been unproven in dogs until now.

Water shortages grip Zimbabwe towns as El Niño impact lingers

BULAWAYO

At a borehole near Mpopoma High School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city, 48-year-old Sakhile Mulawuzi balances a white 25-litre bucket of water on her head while carrying another 10-litre blue bucket filled with water.

She walks slowly back home along a narrow path-

way in Mpopoma, one of the city's high-density suburbs.

In Masvingo, Zimbabwe's oldest town, 30-year-old Ruramai Chinoda stands outside a neighbour's house in the Rujeko high-density suburb, where she collects water from a tap. Her neighbour, who has a borehole, shares this precious resource with the community.

Further north in Mabvuku,

a high-density suburb in the Zimbabwean capital Harare, 43-year-old pushcart operator Nevias Chaurura struggles with eight 20-litre buckets of water.

He delivers them door-to-door for a small fee, as many city dwellers continue to battle severe water shortages.

The ongoing water crises are attributed to a lack of infrastructure planning and the

devastating impact of the El Niño drought. According to the latest update from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), while cooling La Niña conditions may develop over the next three months, they are expected to be relatively weak and short-lived.

The WMO's Global Producing Centres of Long-Range Forecasts predict a 55 per

cent likelihood of a transition from the current neutral conditions (neither El Niño nor La Niña) to La Niña conditions during December 2024 to February 2025.

However, the WMO cautions that while La Niña may bring temporary cooling, it will not reverse the long-term impacts of human-induced global warming, and 2024 is still on track to become the

hottest year on record.

The effects of El Niño have exacerbated water shortages, with the country grappling to overcome the drought's impact on agriculture, water supplies, and daily life.

The ongoing crisis has left many residents of Zimbabwe's major cities without access to reliable water sources, forcing them to seek alternative solutions from boreholes,

shared taps, and delivery services. The situation remains critical, with many people struggling to meet their basic water needs.

As Zimbabwe continues to face these challenges, experts warn that climate patterns such as El Niño and La Niña will continue to play a major role in the country's water and food security in the coming years.

TPSF NOW INTRODUCES CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS TO BOOST BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

BY FRANCIS KAJUBI

THE Tanzania Private Sector Foundation (TPSF) has amended its constitution where it has recognized the start-up sector as part of its important clusters.

Addressing editors yesterday in Dar es Salaam about the amendment, Raphael Maganga TPSF's Chief Executive Officer said that the constitutional amendments have led to the institution's name rebranding to the Tanzania Private Sector Federation.

According to him, the amendments were approved by the Federation's general meeting held on November 20, 2024.

The meeting was attended by more than 70 percent of the TPSF members and the agenda was to make improvements to the constitution.

The amendments were aimed at increasing the participation of clusters that had no representation in the TPSF system, strengthening the advocacy of the private sector and the business community in the country from the district, regional and national levels, thus ensuring the improvement of the business doing environment in the

country.

The improvements also considered the resolutions of the two consecutive sessions of the Tanzania National Business Council (TNBC) held on June 7, 2022 and June 9, 2023 where President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan suggested that improvements be made that will attract more stakeholders from the private sector.

Maganga said this is the right way to make TPSF build a coordinated, disciplined and compliant private sector.

"In the current reforms, the Federation will be led by a governing council that will deal with members and their challenges. There will be an executive committee that will be formed to increase the efficiency of decision-making in the activities of the Federation in order to build good corporate governance," he said.

Through the new system, he said, there will be 25 cluster representatives, the same number as TNBC representatives instead of the previous 10 clusters.

The formulation of the cluster has focused on economic sectors and other sectors to ensure that each individual sector is properly represented and that



Raphael Maganga, TPSF's CEO

existing gaps are fixed.

Maganga said unlike the previous where there was no executive committee, the board was mandated with both representation and managing roles.

In these constitutional reforms, the roles will be managed by the executive committee to guarantee the operation sustainability of the Federation.

To ensure that there is a collaborative system, the Federation has added representatives and important groups that previously did not exist such

as women, youth businesses, Startups, breeding, fishing, health, education, sports, creativity, technology and communication, digital economy, and increased representation from Zanzibar

This is different from before where there was no participation and representation of those groups. Other areas specified in the constitution reforms are to promote the participation of members and the efficiency of the private sector in TNBC.

Zahoro Muhaji, CEO Tanzania

Startup Association, said that the reforms in the constitution make stakeholders from the startup sector new beneficiaries who will have a cluster among the 25.

"The startup industry has been growing and this is one of the results of its growth. This industry in the last four years has attracted investments worth \$300 million;

Between January and September this year, Tanzanian startups have attracted investments worth more than \$54 million. This is a sector that carries many young people," said Muhaji.

Mercy Sila, President Tanzania Women Chamber of Commerce (TWCC) said the constitutional amendments have taken into account the recommendations of the members.

She said that there was already a women's small businesses cluster where TPSF becoming a Federation will expand the scope of opportunities for women.

"This federation is an important platform in influencing policies concerning women and youth so that they can be discussed and made decisions in TNBC," said Sila.

UDSM, Tanesco inspiring future innovators through STEM career project

BY GUARDIAN REPORTER

Tanzanian university students are enriching their STEM careers through practicals and visits to power plants organized by GE Vernova in collaboration with the Tanzania Electric Supply Company (TANESCO) and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM).

The University of Dar es Salaam is home to over 35,000 students, many of whom are pursuing engineering and other STEM disciplines.

This initiative supports the government's efforts to enhance national capabilities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The one-day event provided students with the opportunity to engage directly with professionals from GE Vernova and TANESCO.

Through presentations and interactive Q&A sessions, the students gained insights into university engineering programs that facilitate careers in the energy sector, along with the diverse professional opportunities available.

Sessions also covered topics such as the energy transition, climate change, and TANESCO's role in expanding reliable electricity supply.

"Reliable and efficiently produced electricity is a cornerstone of our National Development Vision 2050. TANESCO is dedicated to building the necessary infrastructure, which requires local engineering and technical talent," said Renata Ndege, Deputy Managing Director, Planning, Research, and Investment, TANESCO.

According to her, programs like this are essential to achieving our goals.

GE Vernova employees participated in the event, sharing real-world insights and mentorship on academic and career progression in the energy sector.

"GE Vernova is dedicated to playing a pivotal role in Tanzania's energy transition," said Oluwatoyin Abegunde, Executive Director, Aeroderivatives;

Gas Power at GE Vernova. By using our advanced technologies, we are committed to helping our customers build a sustainable and resilient energy ecosystem," she said.

The initiative aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of energy-focused career paths and academic opportunities.

Young STEM professionals are crucial in creating an energy system that balances sustainability, availability, and affordability.

"At our university, we offer essential practical and theoretical training. Events like this help students visualize how their education applies to real-world scenarios," said Dr. Aviti, Senior Lecturer, Department of Electrical Engineering, College of Engineering and Technology.

He asserted that collaborations with the government and industry ensure graduates are well-equipped to support Tanzania's energy ecosystem, fostering broader development goals.

For over 130 years, GE Vernova has supported the electricity value chain across Sub-Saharan Africa, encompassing wind, hydro, and gas power generation, as well as transmission, distribution, and software solutions.

In Tanzania, GE Vernova technologies contribute significantly to the national electricity supply, including approximately 600 megawatts (MW) of gas turbines.

As Tanzania's leading provider of gas turbine technology, GE Vernova supports reliable base-load power at key plants, such as 92 MW Ubungo III, the 150 MW Kinyerezi I and the 150 MW Kinyerezi I Extension.

By Guardian Reporter

THE Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA) yesterday commended President Samia Suluhu Hassan's economic diplomacy as a key driver in attracting international investors to Tanzania.

EPZA Director General, Charles Itembe, made the statement in Dar es Salaam during a meeting with a delegation from the Dubai Chamber of Commerce to explore investment opportunities.

"Tanzania is now recognised as a gateway for manufacturers targeting African and global markets," he said, attributing the high-profile visit to the achievements of the Sixth Government under President Samia Suluhu Hassan's exemplary leadership.

During the discussions, Itembe assured the Dubai Chamber of Commerce delegation of the safety and security of their investments in Tanzania.

He emphasized that Tanzania's close diplomatic ties and economic cooperation with numerous countries make it an ideal investment destination.

He further informed the delegation of Tanzania's participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which grants duty-free and quota-free access to the African

EPZA commends President Samia on investment drive



Exports Processing Zones premises in Dar es Salaam. File Photo.

market for goods produced in Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

Mr Itembe urged Dubai Chamber members to seize this timely investment opportunity.

He also shared details of Tanzania's ongoing preparations for SEZs in key locations, including Bagamoyo, which alone is expected to host over 2,000 industries.

Other priority areas include Dodoma, Tanga, Kwana and Kigoma, where EPZA has allocated large tracts of land for industrial development.

He said the private sector is invited to invest in infrastructure and establish factories to produce various goods.

"Through such visits, EPZA aims to enhance its competi-

tiveness in attracting industrial investors from various countries, including the Arab world, ultimately yielding positive outcomes for Tanzania's economic growth," he noted.

He asserted that the delegation's visit serves as proof of the global acceptance of the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and Special Economic Zone

(SEZ) programmes. "These programmes have been instrumental in advancing industrial economies worldwide, enabling nations to rapidly boost domestic production," he highlighted.

Discussing the delegation's agenda, the EPZA Director General noted that the visit aimed to enhance the existing partnership between EPZA and the Dubai Chamber of Commerce.

He said the delegation also sought to explore investment opportunities available in Tanzania's SEZs.

The President of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and head of delegation, Mohammad Ali Lootah, acknowledged the remarkable growth in trade between Tanzania and Dubai, now valued at 2.7 billion US dollars.

He attributed this increase to the flourishing Tanzania-UAE trade relations, bolstered by ongoing investments in Tanzania's port sector.

Given the strong ties between Tanzania and Dubai, Lootah remarked that many investors are keen on exploring Tanzania's investment potential through Special Economic Zones.

"EPZA, he said, should expect an influx of businesspeople and industrialists eager to identify opportunities in Tanzania's industrial sector and beyond," he stated.

Tech innovators must embrace scalability to attract investors

ACCRA

THE Secretary to the National Communications Authority (NCA), Nana Adjoa Adobea Khartey, has advised tech innovators to prioritise scalability in their projects to attract investors.

She said while solving local problems was important, innovators should always develop solutions with the potential for growth beyond their immediate market.

"A scalable solution gives investors the confidence that their capital can fuel expansion, help-

ing your business tap into new markets and deliver long-term value," she said, explaining that investors were particularly drawn to ventures that show a clear path to growth.

She used the success of mobile money in Ghana as an example, illustrating how what began as a solution to financial exclusion has since grown into a model that is being replicated across the continent and beyond.

According to data from the Bank of Ghana (BoG), between September and October 2024, the total number of mobile money

transactions surged from GHe705 million to GHe728 million.

This increase corresponded to a rise in transaction value, which climbed from GHe284.9 billion to GHe298.6 billion emphasising the rapid growth of digital financial services which have become a significant contributor to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a key driver of economic transformation.

Khartey who gave the advice during her presentation on the topic 'Government Policy and Regulation: Key Drivers for an Enabling Tech Environment' at

the climax of the 14th edition of Tech in Ghana Conference in Accra on Wednesday, said mobile money's scalability allowed it to transcend local boundaries and attract significant investments, transforming the financial landscape in many emerging markets.

The conference on the theme: "Security, Synergy and Storytelling", brought together about 400 players in the tech space to showcase their innovation to drive investment into the tech ecosystem.

It featured discussions on inno-

vation in health and education, partnerships in entertainment and technology, and strategies for addressing challenges like regulation and funding in the tech space.

In addition to scalability, Mrs Khartey cautioned tech innovators against adopting every emerging technological trend without carefully assessing its relevance to their specific market needs or business goals.

Instead, she said they must focus on upskill themselves and ensure they remain competitive in their specific markets.

"Don't try to do some of everything or be distracted by every new innovation that comes along. Instead, assess its impact on your business and focus on staying relevant to your market," she said.

Speaking to Graphic Business on the sideline of the conference, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of hapaSpace, a Kumasi-based tech hub, Gideon Brefo, said the country has come a long way in embracing technology highlighting how tech hubs have nurtured local talent and empowered young innovators to take on global challenges.

SEPLAT ENERGY SEALS \$1.2BN EXXONMOBIL ASSETS BUYOUT

LAGOS

Seplat Energy Plc has completed its acquisition of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) from ExxonMobil.

The transaction is transformative for Seplat Energy, more than doubling production and positioning the company to drive growth and profitability, while contributing significantly to Nigeria's future prosperity.

MPNU adds substantial reserves and production to Seplat Energy; 409 MMboe 2P reserves and 670 MMboe 2P + 2C reserves and resources as at 30 June 2024 and 6M 2024 average daily production of 71.4 kboepd.

"Seplat Energy sincerely thanks His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, for supporting this transaction, and appreciates the support and diligence of the various Ministries and regulators for all the work to reach a successful conclusion," said Udoma Udo Udoma, chairman of Seplat Energy.

"We are delighted to welcome

the MPNU employees to Seplat Energy. We are excited to begin our journey in a new region of the country, and we look forward to replicating the positive impacts we have achieved within our communities in our current areas of operations.

"Seplat's mission is to deliver value to all our stakeholders, and we treasure the good relationships we have developed with the Government, regulators, communities and our staff," he further said.

As an operator, Seplat's immediate tasks are to ensure smooth transition of MPNU staff into Seplat, and on the operations, to swiftly target numerous opportunities that exist to organically grow production and further enhance the value of the assets for all stakeholders.

Detailed guidance for the enlarged Group in 2025 will be provided with Seplat's full year 2024 results, expected in late February 2025.

Roger Brown, chief executive officer of Seplat Energy, said: "To-

day we have achieved a major milestone in the history of Seplat Energy and I extend my thanks to the entire Seplat team for their hard work and perseverance to complete this transaction. MPNU's employees and contractors have a strong reputation for safety and operational excellence, and I welcome them to the Seplat Energy Group.

"We have acquired a company with one of the best portfolios of assets and related infrastructure in a world class basin, providing enormous potential for the Seplat Group. Our commitment is to invest to increase oil and gas production while reducing costs and emissions, maximising value for all our stakeholders. MPNU is a perfect fit with our strategy to build a sustainable business that can deliver affordable, accessible and reliable energy for Nigeria alongside attractive returns to our shareholders."

The management of Seplat Energy PLC has denied encroachment on any communities lands in Delta State.

The company made the denial in a statement signed by Stanley Opara, Manager, Corporate Communications, External Affairs and Social Performance, Seplat Energy, which was made available to newsmen in Benin City.

The statement entitled, "Protest by Abigorodo and Obotie Communities in Delta State", noted that Sapele-Okpe Community and Ugbukurusu Community are the host communities to Seplat's Sapele field facilities, explaining that the oil and gas company has no relationship with Abigorodo and Obotie communities in Warri North and Sapele Local Government Areas in Delta State as its host communities.

"On Friday 28th November 2024, our attention was drawn to a media report indicating that there was a protest by the Abigorodo and Obotie Communities in Warri North Local Government Area and Sapele Local Government Area in Delta State, where the Communities accused Seplat of illegally encroaching on their land.



Engineers on duty at Seplat Energy Plc

"This alleged claim is both untrue and unfounded. The host Communities to Seplat's operations in that area are Ugbukurusu and Sapele-Okpe communities. With the enactment of the PIA and the associated benefits derived therefrom, these Communities (Abigorodo and Obotie Communities) started laying false claims to the entire area hosting Seplat's facilities in Sapele Field, within OML 41", the statement partly read.

The Seplat Energy, posited that the records of assets handed over to it by the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria

Limited upon acquisition of its asset did not show Abigorodo and Obotie as host Communities to the company.

The statement added that the names of protesting Communities didn't form part of the host Communities handed over to Seplat by SPDC.

"The records evidence Sapele-Okpe Community and Ugbukurusu Community as the host communities to Seplat's Sapele field facilities.

"From inception till date, Seplat has not acquired any land from these communities for its operations within that area or at all.

Christmas train travel to be hit by staff shortages

LONDON

The government is concerned that Christmas train services could be disrupted by staff shortages, the rail minister has said.

Lord Hendy said that the transport department was going to "keep a close watch on staffing" throughout the holidays.

Disruptions may also be exacerbated by fresh industrial action, with Avanti West Coast train managers voting to strike for three days over the festive period.

Recruitment has proven difficult across the rail industry, leaving train operating companies dependent on staff volunteering to work extra paid shifts, particularly during big occasions.

A Department for Transport official told MPs that the railway system was generally "over-reliant on overtime working" for train crew, particularly around Christmas.

Many train drivers and other crew members do not have Sunday working included in their contracts, with some operators offering extra paid shifts to ensure services can run.

On Tuesday, the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union said that walkouts have been scheduled for 22, 23 and 29 December for Avanti services, after it rejected the train company's proposals for "rest day working arrangements".

Train managers typically work a 41-hour week but due to staff shortages can be asked to work on their days off. The RMT has, however, described that the current arrangements as "unacceptable", with some 300 train managers expected to walk out.

Avanti West Coast said customers would face "significant disruption" during "our busiest and most important" time of the year.

It was announced weeks after RMT members working at a number of other rail companies accepted a pay rise of 4.75% for the last financial year, and a 4.5% increase for 2024-25.

Those working for Northern, however, recently rejected the firm's enhanced four-month pay offer for conductors working on Sundays.

As a result, passengers may see disruption across its services in December, the company said.

Lord Hendy told MPs on the Commons Transport Committee that there were worries that closures of parts of the railway over Christmas may put more pressure on others.

Britain's rail network completely shuts down every year on Christmas Day, with a limited service on Boxing Day.

Many routes will be closed for longer during the festive period because Network Rail, which owns and maintains the railways, will be carrying out engineering work.

Lord Hendy, who chaired Network Rail from 2015 until he was brought into the Labour government, said: "Christmas is a good time to do major engineering work, because the demand is lower over several days."

Network Rail has previously said passenger numbers at major stations typically drop by 50 to 60% during the seven days between Christmas Day and a new year compared with a week in November or early December.



Glasgow city council

Firm to install 1,000 solar panels on roof

GLASGOW

Glasgow's Kelvin Hall is set to install 1,000 solar panels across its roof in January.

The collection of solar panels on the council-owned multi-purpose building will be the largest rooftop array in Glasgow and one of the biggest in Scotland.

The latest phase of solar panel installation in the city also includes five primary schools and two daycare centres, where installation work is already complete.

It is hoped the rooftop arrays will

save more than £183,000 on energy bills each year.

Originally built in 1927, the Kelvin Hall has hosted a range of sporting events, concerts and exhibitions, including Elton John and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

It is now home to collections, temporary displays and teaching and research facilities, as well as sport halls and a Glasgow Club health and fitness centre.

Solar panels have already been installed on 33 buildings across Glasgow in recent years as part of the council's plan to increase the use of sustainable

energy.

The buildings included in this phase of installation are Castleton, Camstradden, Dalmarnock, Haghill and St Bernard's primary schools, as well as Mallaig Road Daycare, Muirhead Road Daycare and the Kelvin Hall.

The council said the solar panels, which have an expected life span of 25 years, will have paid for themselves in about six to seven years.

It comes after Glasgow's council matched a £522,000 loan from the Scotland Recycling Fund scheme delivered by Salix on behalf of the Scottish

Government.

The loan will be repaid using energy savings made from a reduced electricity bill, according to the council.

Councillor Angus Miller said: "Vacant land is increasingly at a premium within Glasgow and so it makes sense to utilise the available space on roofs across our built estate.

"Installing solar on panels on buildings allows those buildings to benefit directly from the renewable energy that is produced and this helps us maximise the financial return of our investment.

"Wherever possible we will install solar panels on our estate and we are currently looking at multiple locations throughout the city where solar can be introduced."

A feasibility study for installations at 37 more locations is currently under way, according to the council.

On the other hand, a proposed solar farm could lead to problems with "glare and glint", objectors fear.

Lightsource bp resubmitted its application for the 92-hectare (227-acre) site near Burnhope, County Durham, following an earlier judicial review ruling the county council's decision to approve it was "unlawful".

Campaigners have argued the newly proposed farm is the same size and still contains 110,640 panels.

However, the developer said it had improved landscaping to minimise visual impacts and the project would provide £500,000 in community benefits.

Up to 14 fields near the village could be overlaid with panels, including areas near the Chapman's Well nature reserve, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

Plant pot tag among archaeological finds

LONDON

Pieces of a plant pot tag uncovered at the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival site have been listed among Scotland's top five archaeological discoveries of this year.

The festival on the south of the River Clyde was part of an effort to re-imagine Glasgow after the loss of heavy industry in the city.

University of Glasgow archaeologists said the tag, which was for a red campion flower, was the first piece of physical evidence excavated at the 120-acre site.

Scottish archaeology hub Dig It! also has a Pictish spearbutt found in Fife, an Orkney shipwreck, a Hebridean prehistoric site and a Celtic bangle from the Highlands among its "most amazing" discoveries of 2024.

Garden festivals were held



Expert analysing the section of shipwreck found in Orkney

across the UK in the 1980s and 1990s to try and stimulate investment and development in former industrial areas.

Glasgow's event was held on an area of dockland and featured green space, a theme

park and adventure playground.

It was officially opened by Prince Charles and Princess Diana and over its five months drew more than four million visitors.

The project After the Garden Festival has been gathering memorabilia, photos and memories of the event.

The tag was confirmed as an artefact by a photograph taken of the festival site during its construction in 1987.

University of Glasgow's Dr Kenny Brophy said: "Contemporary archaeology is at the forefront of efforts from archaeologists to become more socially engaged and relevant.

"But it can also be used to excite, enthuse and inspire, as has been happening in Glasgow where there's a huge amount of nostalgia for the festival."

The oldest find on the list is a prehistoric site revealed by coastal erosion at Nisabost on Harris in the Western Isles.

Stone tools made from quartz and flint were discovered in a thin layer of charcoal and peat.

They are similar to tools previously found on Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites in the Isles.

Joanna Hambly, of coastal heritage group The Scape Trust, said: "I love finds like this because they reveal the secrets that coastal erosion uncovers - a glimpse into a prehistoric world hidden in plain sight."

Early in 2024, experts confirmed the discovery of a rare bangle fragment decorated with hand-carved Celtic art motifs.

The piece of jewellery was made from sedimentary rock called shale and found by AOC Archaeology Group in 2020 at Dalchork, a Bronze Age site in Sutherland in the Highlands.

National Museums Scotland's Dr Fraser Hunter has reconstructed the design, which includes crescent motifs, scroll designs and curved lines.

CONSTRUCTION

FASHION EXPERT'S INSIDER GUIDE TO SHOPPING IN NEW YORK CITY

NEW YORK

Just in time for the holidays, stylist to the stars Erin Walsh shares her insider recommendations for getting to the heart of New York City's vast shopping scene.

New York City's shopping scene is undeniably iconic. The nation's undisputed retail capital since the late 1800s, its shimmering concrete streets teem with luxury flagships, historic department stores and edgy indie boutiques. And yet, few out-of-town visitors venture past the chain stores of 5th Avenue, Rockefeller Center and Herald Square.

"If you only go [there], you're missing the special gems," said Erin Walsh - long-time New York resident and stylist to flawless Hollywood celebs like Anne Hathaway and Selena Gomez. Walsh is a passionate shopper, and equally passionate about New York City. "I love New York so much," she said. "I feel like when you live there, it becomes not just a part of your identity, but energetically, your heart starts to beat with it."

Walsh's approach to shopping in New York City is simple: "Get lost. The only way you get surprised and inspired is when you just wander around." But for Walsh, getting lost means meandering through laser-focused "pockets" of her favourite neighbourhoods to create ultra-niche experiences that don't stop at shopping. "I always think of the restaurants around it," she said. "Things that feel cosy... it just makes it more fun."

Here is her expert guide to "getting lost" in New York City's shopping scene.

Walsh's "pockets" often span mere street blocks, carving up a neighbourhood into unofficial micro-nabes, like the cobblestoned stretch of West Broadway and Broadway in SoHo that's her pick for women's fashion.

Artsy SoHo - famed for its tony boutiques - is teeming with "so many options", she said, naming The Webster, Kate Spade and Chloé as her go-to



The shops of Midtown Manhattan are always beautiful - and packed - during the winter holidays

luxury brand stores in the area.

Walsh also likes combing the streets to uncover surprising indie boutiques, like Kirna Zabête on Mercer Street, which offers highly curated selections from both legendary and up-and-coming designers.

While in this stretch of SoHo, Walsh likes to make a stop at "special places", like La Mercerie. "It's not only a restaurant," she said. "It's clothing, a showroom. Everything that's in the restaurant is for sale. They even sell flowers... and then you go to Balthazar [restaurant and bar] at the end of the day."

When it comes to shopping for her male clients and loved ones, Walsh heads to the industrial Bowery neighbourhood in downtown Manhattan - a stretch of gritty city blocks she fondly calls "woody" and "underrated, absolutely".

Her favourite Bowery neighbourhood shops are found in the pocket near The Bowery Hotel, including [upscale home decor store] John Derien on 2nd Street, which Walsh calls her "Christmas problem solver". She also always makes a stop at Dashwood Books on Bond Street. "It's my husband's favourite bookstore,"

she said. "Just that little stretch there. It's so cosy and wonderful. They put the Goop shop there, too. It's a special collection of little shops."

New York City shopping is always otherworldly, but never more so than during the winter holidays (blame Miracle on 34th Street). The Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade down 5th Avenue draws hordes of spectators each year, the ritzy shops at Rockefeller Center are almost as much of a draw as the plaza's massive Christmas tree, and the high art holiday window displays of 5th Avenue's historic department stores like Bergdorf Goodman and Saks are nothing short of legendary.

Locals generally avoid the tourist-thronged madness of Midtown during the holidays, but Walsh always makes it a point to visit. "You have to go to Midtown and do all of that," she said. "It's just so special. Even with my kids, taking them to the Christmas tree [in Rockefeller Center] when there's so many people you can barely move. It's great."

Walsh, who studied theatre at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, is just as passionate about interiors

as she is about fashion, finding joy in layering textures and materials in New York City's tiny spaces. "If you're living an aesthetic, it's the spaces that you allow into your energy that really impacts how you feel," she said.

She hits sophisticated Tribeca and the skewed streets of the historic West Village when she wants to snap up beautifully designed homewares and surprise gifts, from mirrors to candlesticks. "I've given rugs, I've given furniture pieces, trays, books. I think a robe [dressing gown] makes a beautiful gift," she said. "I like that idea when you give someone a present... you want them to feel held and seen." She also enjoys visiting candle stores and shopping for fragrances, which she thinks are a "surprising gift". "People always say don't do that," she said. "But I always feel like the best gifts, you take a risk."

Whenever she needs to shop for children, Walsh heads back to artsy SoHo but narrows her focus even more tightly to a two-block stretch on SoHo's westernmost edge, citing Bonpoint on West Broadway as the touchstone for children's designers in the area. "There's so many cute little kids shops there, and you only find that when you're wandering around," she said.

Another of her favourite stores for children is Makie on Thompson Street: "The most beautiful kids clothes... It's Japanese but feels a little bit Scandinavian somehow." And a final stop at L'heure [café] on West Broadway for their signature macarons in a beautiful box will delight adults and children alike.

Walsh's favourite shopping pocket in uptown Manhattan is the swanky stretch of Madison Avenue surrounding The Mark Hotel. But before even venturing to the boutiques, Walsh recommends visiting Georgia Louise Atelier on 71st Street for a "reset" facial and a luxe beauty haul of high-tech face tools or products from Louise's own skincare line.

Afterwards, she suggests hitting the av-

enue's stretch of luxury shops like Sidney Garber jewellery, Ralph Lauren and La Ligne clothing boutique, which she loves for its sweaters. "I could give probably everyone I know and that I don't know, a sweater from La Ligne and everybody would be thrilled," she said. Rounding out Walsh's Upper East Side luxe shopping experience is a visit to the Gagosian art gallery and finally winding down at the end of the day with a drink at The Mark.

Walsh recommends another ultra-niche pocket of SoHo with a tight concentration of enough fun businesses to tie up an entire day. "There's some great furniture and jewellery shops on the corner of Crosby and Howard," she said. "You get your nails done [at Paintbox nail salon]. And then you get your man a present and coffee at Saturdays [NYC]."

Of the area's handbag and jewellery stores, Walsh enjoys visiting Prada and Dinosaur Designs, then exploring the smaller, up-and-coming boutiques in the area before meandering one block east to Lafayette Street, where she zeroes in on Santa Maria Novella (the NYC branch of the luxe Italian fragrance line) and the McNally Jackson indie bookshop. Afterwards, she makes a point to stop by the Sant Ambroeu bar for a refreshing Campari spritz. "Always feels good," she said. "It's about getting lost, right?"

As much as Walsh loves shopping in Manhattan's classic downtown neighbourhoods, she keeps her eye on up-and-coming shopping areas, too, like the Flatiron district's Dover Street Market. The Flatiron District - home to the striking wedge-shaped Flatiron building and Madison Square Park - "has really exploded in the past few years", said Walsh. "They have a unique and diverse selection and there's so many cute little coffee shops and restaurants... there's great jewellery, a more international selection of designers."

LAOS

As chilly weather blankets China, a growing number of senior residents are traveling to Laos via the China-Laos Railway, due to the smooth and comfortable train ride, favorable weather and affordability of the neighboring country.

It has become common practice over the years for some silver-haired residents to trade frigid temperatures for the balmy climes of Southwest China's Yunnan province during winter.

However, thanks to the China-Laos Railway, an increasing number of people are venturing beyond the borders of Yunnan and exploring the neighboring country, since there is a convenient train that connects them and because what was once an arduous journey can now be completed in a matter of hours.

As a flagship project under the framework of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, the 1,035-km railway, linking Kunming in Yunnan and the Laotian capital of Vientiane, has greatly enhanced regional connectivity, and facilitated people-to-people exchanges since it began operating in December 2021.

"The train ride is so smooth and comfortable, and it's really a good



Passengers get off a train along the China-Laos Railway.

Chinese flock to Laos to beat cold

way to travel," said 72-year-old Zhang Mei from Beijing, who recently returned from a weeklong stay in Laos' Luang Prabang to Xishuangbanna in Yunnan.

Laos is just beautiful at this time of the year - the weather is

perfect, the scenery is gorgeous, and everything is so much more affordable compared to traveling domestically, Zhang said.

Zhang is just one of the growing legions of elderly Chinese tourists flocking across the bor-

der via the China-Laos Railway.

According to data from the Mohan frontier checkpoint, between Oct 1 and Nov 25, the border crossing recorded over 20,000 outbound Chinese tourist trips - a 195 percent increase

compared to the same period last year.

Notably, nearly 60 percent of these travelers were aged 60 and above, with the oldest passenger clocking in at 82 years old.

With spacious seating and am-

ple legroom, the railway's coaches provide a far more relaxing travel experience for senior citizens compared with other transportation means, said Wang Qiang, director of the Mohan frontier checkpoint.

To further cater to the needs of elderly passengers, the Mohan frontier checkpoint has rolled out a suite of special services. These include dedicated channels for assisting the elderly with luggage, wheelchair support and coordination with tour operators to streamline the entry and exit process. "Our top priority is ensuring the travel experience is as smooth and stress-free as possible for our senior citizens," Wang said. "Whether it's expedited Customs clearance or onboard concierge services, we're committed to making their journeys as comfortable and enjoyable as possible."

For many elderly Chinese, cross-border travel is about far more than just sightseeing - it's a chance to rejuvenate both body and mind. The China-Laos Railway has made this type of travel more accessible and enjoyable, said Zhou Mingbo, deputy general manager of online travel platform Fliggy's holiday business department.

This, in turn, has unlocked new opportunities for China's growing silver-haired demographic to explore their southeastern neighbor. No longer burdened by the physical demands and logistical challenges of long-haul bus or car journeys, they can now focus on the relaxing experience, Zhou added.

Firms team up to tap EV battery market

GUANGZHOU

Franco-Italian automaker Stellantis and Chinese battery giant Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd announced on Tuesday an investment of 4.1 billion euros (\$4.3 billion) to form a joint venture that will build a large-scale lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery plant in Zaragoza, Spain.

The move marks another major step by CATL - the world's largest electric vehicle battery maker - in overseas expansion, after it brought its battery manufacturing technology to Europe through its two plants

in Germany and Hungary, which are already operational.

The facility, which is expected to start production by end-2026, could reach up to 50 gigawatt-hours capacity by then. This, according to industry experts, can power an average of 700,000 cars a day.

The 50-50 joint venture between CATL and Stellantis will boost the latter's LFP portfolio in Europe, enabling the automaker to offer more affordable battery-electric passenger cars.

"Stellantis is committed to a decarbonized future, embracing all available ad-

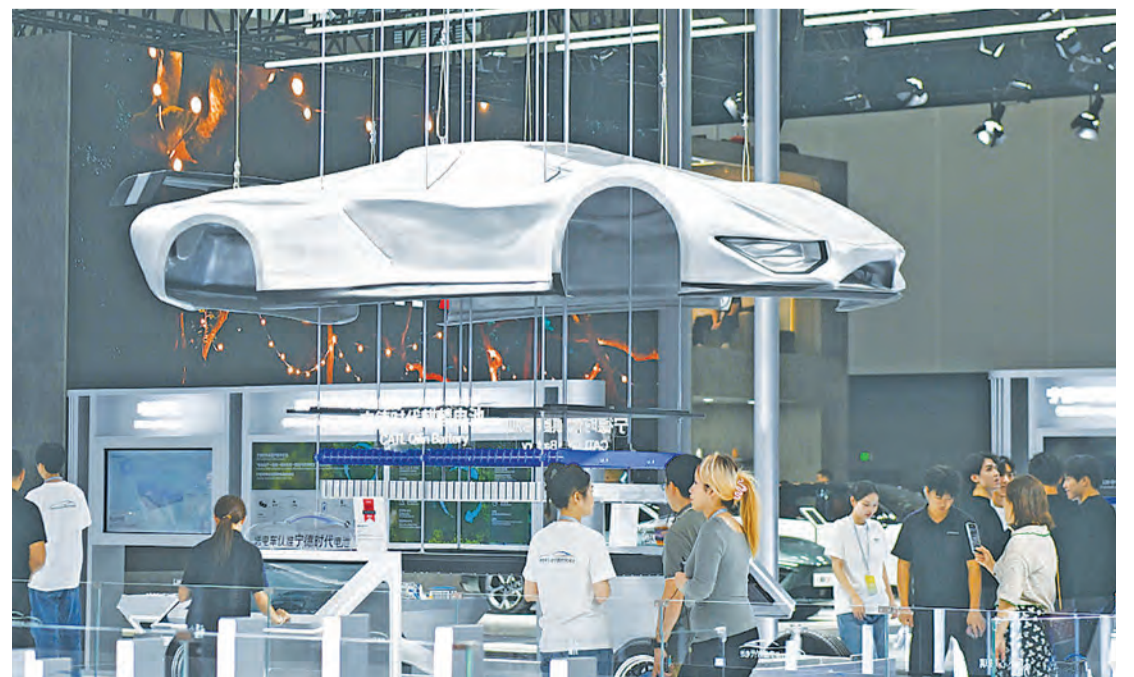
vanced battery technologies to bring competitive EV products to our customers," said Stellantis Chairman John Elkann.

"This important joint venture with our partner CATL will bring innovative battery production to a manufacturing site that is already a leader in clean and renewable energy, helping drive a 360-degree sustainable approach," Elkann said.

In November 2023, Stellantis and CATL signed a nonbinding deal for the local supply of LFP battery cells and modules for EV production in Europe and established a long-term col-

laboration on creating a bold technology roadmap to support Stellantis' advanced battery EVs and identifying opportunities to further strengthen the battery value chain.

"The new joint venture has taken our cooperation with Stellantis to new heights, and our cutting-edge battery technology and outstanding operation know-how combined with Stellantis' decadeslong experience in running business locally in Zaragoza will ensure a major success story in the industry," said Robin Zeng, chairman and CEO of CATL.



Visitors gather at Contemporary Amperex Technology's booth during an auto expo in Guangzhou, Guangdong province

WORLD

WHO confident of finalising pandemic treaty in year 2025

GENEVA

THE World Health Organization chief on Tuesday voiced confidence that states could finalize a pandemic agreement by May 2025, despite questions about whether the administration of US President-elect Donald Trump will support it.

The WHO's 194 member states have been negotiating for two years on an agreement that could increase collaboration before and during pandemics after

acknowledged failures during COVID-19.

An initial attempt to seal an agreement failed this year and diplomats see a deal, which right-wing commentators say would undermine sovereignty, as less likely under Trump.

"They (countries) are committed to finalizing the agreement in time for the World Health Assembly next May. I remain confident that they will," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press club briefing in Geneva.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, speaks during a press conference at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, Dec 10, 2024. AP

Ghebreyesus was asked repeatedly about future cooperation with the Trump administration but appeared relaxed at the prospect.

"The relationship between WHO and the United States has been actually a good model partnership," he said.

"(We) have been partnering for many years, and we believe that will be the case. And I believe the US leaders understand that the United States cannot be safe unless the rest of the world is safe."

At the same briefing, Tedros said

that 10 early samples from patients in Democratic Republic of Congo suffering from a mystery illness had tested positive for malaria. However, he said that did not rule out other concurrent diseases.

The displacement of 1 million people in Syria since a rebel offensive began last month has increased the strain on a fragile health system, Tedros said, and returning refugees could add more. The WHO has sent trauma supplies to a Damascus hospital and is working on supporting other facilities, he added.

Rock-solid relations and Western machinations: What Medvedev said in China

BEIJING

RUSSIAN Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev has summed up the outcome of the first day of his visit to China.

Talking to reporters, he spoke about the state of relations between Moscow and Beijing, obstacles posed by the West in this regard and on certain internal Russian topics - shining a light on immigration.

Here are the key statements made by the high-ranking official.



On cooperation with China

- Relations between Moscow and Beijing are rock solid; they have never been better.

- Cross-party cooperation between the United Russia Party and the Communist Party of China is developing intensively.

- Tourism exchanges are growing by leaps and bounds. Millions of people already travel between Russia and China. This was facilitated sanctions from Western countries, who are trying to create obstacles for the Russians.

About the West's discontent

- The West seeks to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing, because it sees this friendship as a threat to itself: "the entire policy of the Anglo-Saxon world is aimed at this."

- The pressure is unlikely to lessen under the new US Administration. It might even grow.

- The Anglo-Saxons will never succeed in pitting Russia against China: "These are good-neighborly, equitable relations between sovereign states - mutually profitable, beneficial and friendly."

About personal impressions

- China has undergone sweeping changes in the last few decades, an achievement that should be admired. "No one else in the world was able to do that."

- Good rituals begin "with a cup of good green tea in the morning" - this helps "to perk one up, even despite the jet lag."

About Russia and immigrants

- The interests of Russian citizens must be a priority of Russia's immigration policy: "We protect our country with our legislation, while observing, of course, the fundamental rights of those [immigrants] who work here, in Russia."

- The most important thing is to scrupulously calculate the consequences of the decisions being made; such a complex problem is not to be taken lightly, reckless statements must not be made. **Agencies**

Zanzibar minister attends International Gita Mahotsav 2024 in India

H.E. Tabia Maulid Mwita, Minister of Information, Culture, Art, Youth Affairs, and Sports of Zanzibar, represented Zanzibar, Tanzania at the inauguration ceremony of the International Gita Mahotsav 2024, held in Kurukshetra, Haryana, India. Tanzania is the partner country for this year's prestigious event.

The Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Nayab Singh Saini, extended a warm welcome to the delegation, which included H.E. Tabia Maulid Mwita. Together, the dignitaries inaugurated Tanzania's pavilion, which showcased the country's rich cultural heritage, traditional attire, and authentic cuisine. They also inaugurated the state-level exhibition organized by Haryana's Department of Information, Public Relations, Language, and Culture, highlighting the state government's significant achievements over the past decade.

Speaking at the event, Chief Minister Saini attributed the international recognition of the Gita Mahotsav to the persistent efforts of the Haryana government. This year's festival, which began on November 28 and continues until December 15, features a vibrant array of cultural programs, live broadcasts from iconic temples such as Jagannath Puri and Dwarkadhish, and global Gita recitations by 18,000 students.

Dr. Pindi Chana, Tanzania's Minister of Tourism and Natural Resources, is expected to travel to India to attend the festival's closing ceremony, further strengthening the cultural ties between Tanzania and India. **Agencies**

Macao's incoming top official vows to advance success of 'one country, two systems'

JUBA

MACAO, Dec. 12 (Xinhua) -- Sam Hou Fai, Macao's incoming chief executive, has pledged to further the success of the "one country, two systems" practice, which has been in place in the region since Macao's return to China from Portuguese rule in 1999.

"Improving livelihoods and enhancing the quality of life of residents will be a cornerstone of the new regional government's agenda," said Sam, who will assume office as the sixth-term chief executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) on Dec. 20. In an interview with Xinhua, he emphasized plans to address public concerns across multiple areas, including employment, social security, public services, healthcare, housing, and transportation.

Having lived in Macao for 38 years, Sam has established both his career and family in this region.

Sam was elected on Oct. 13 with an overwhelming 394 votes. During his candidacy, he engaged extensively with community groups, institutions and residents, gathering insights and feedback to effectively shape his policy vision for the next five years.

As the former president of the SAR's Court of Final Appeal, Sam underscored the critical role of law-based governance in achieving effective leadership. He intends to implement a series of reforms in legal, administrative, judicial and grassroots governance systems to improve governance in Macao.

Reflecting on Macao's economy, which has been reliant on the gaming industry, Sam highlighted the severe



Sam Hou Fai, Macao's incoming chief executive, speaks at an interview in Macao, south China, Nov. 19, 2024. Xinhua

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which revealed the risks of relying on a single-industry economy.

"Challenges during the three years of the pandemic deepened society's understanding of the urgency and necessity of appropriate economic diversification," he said.

The SAR government will foster non-gaming industries, build a higher-level economic governance system, and explore innovative, forward-thinking reforms. This includes making medium- and long-term development plans tailored to various sectors, according to Sam.

Under the "one country, two systems" framework, Macao enjoys distinct advantages, including its status as a free trade port, a separate customs territory, a simple and low-tax environment, extensive global connections,

and a rich blend of Chinese and Western cultures.

Looking forward, Sam said the government aims to enhance Macao's openness and internationalization. He envisions the city playing a key role in China's domestic and international economic flows and acting as a platform for both outbound and inbound exchanges -- while actively participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Macao will also focus on attracting high-caliber international talent to support its development and contribute to national growth, he noted.

In addition, Sam expressed Macao's commitment to strengthening its role as a "precise intermediary" for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Meanwhile, Macao will deepen its collaboration with Guangdong and

Hong Kong in advancing the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, he said.

Sam emphasized the importance of removing barriers to help foster integration across industries, technology and public welfare -- with the ultimate goal of creating a unified market within the Greater Bay Area and enabling more efficient flows of people, goods, capital and information.

"Safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the highest priority under the 'one country, two systems' policy," Sam said. "The SAR government will prioritize maintaining national security and ensuring Macao's social stability," he said. "We will uphold the authority of China's Constitution and Macao SAR Basic Law, fully implement the 'patriots administering Macao' principle, strengthen legal and enforcement mechanisms to safeguard national security, and counter anti-China forces and foreign interference."

"The successful practice of 'one country, two systems' over the past 25 years has demonstrated its vitality and strengths," Sam added. "At this new juncture, we must draw from our experience and further advance the implementation of 'one country, two systems' to fully realize its advantages."

Looking ahead, Sam urged government departments to enhance their research efforts to craft more precise, evidence-based policies that are in line with the public's core needs. "Macao is our shared home. Its high-quality development relies on the collective efforts of every resident," he said.

Xinhua

Russia completed its mission in Syria some time ago – Kremlin

MOSCOW

RUSSIA assisted Syria in countering terrorists and stabilizing the situation after 2015, but subsequent actions were up to the country's government, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"A while ago, Russia helped the Syrian Arab Republic in

combating terrorists and ensuring stability when the situation posed a threat to the entire region. We put in significant effort toward that goal. Russia completed its mission at that point," he said.

"Afterward, it was the [Bashar] Assad government that took charge in its own

country, striving to ensure development, but unfortunately, the situation reached the point it did," Peskov said, adding that "now, we need to proceed based on the realities on the ground."

Asked how a potential change of government in Syria would affect Moscow's geo-

political influence in the Middle East, the presidential spokesman emphasized that "Russia maintains dialogue with all countries in the region." "We are committed to continuing in this manner," Peskov said.

In late November, armed opposition forces launched a large-scale offensive on the

Syrian army's positions and entered Damascus on December 8, while government troops withdrew from the capital. A Kremlin source told TASS on Sunday that Assad and his family members had arrived in Moscow. Russia granted them asylum on humanitarian grounds. **Agencies**

Somalia, Ethiopia agree to work together to resolve Somaliland port dispute

ANKARA

SOMALIA and Ethiopia said they would work together to resolve a dispute over Addis Ababa's plan to build a port in the breakaway region of Somaliland, which had drawn in regional powers and threatened to further destabilise the Horn of Africa.

The two countries' leaders said they had agreed to find commercial arrangements to allow landlocked Ethiopia "reliable, secure and sustainable access to and from the sea" after talks on Wednesday mediated by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan.

The meeting was their first since January when Ethiopia said it would lease a port in Somalia's breakaway northern region of Somaliland in exchange for recognising the area's independence.

Mogadishu rejected the deal and threatened to expel Ethiopian troops who were stationed in Somalia to fight Islamist insurgents.

Somalia opposes international recognition of Somaliland, which has governed itself and enjoyed comparative peace and stability since declaring independence in 1991.

In a joint statement released late on Wednesday,

Somalia and Ethiopia said they had agreed to start technical negotiations by the end of February next year, and to conclude them within four months.

They did not go into detail. "This joint declaration focuses on the future, not the past," Erdogan said at a press conference in Ankara afterwards.

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said he was ready to work with Ethiopia, while Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed welcomed Turkish efforts to resolve the dispute.

The spat has drawn Somalia closer to Egypt, which

has quarrelled with Ethiopia for years over Addis Ababa's construction of a vast hydro dam on the Nile River, and to Eritrea, another of Ethiopia's longtime foes.

Turkey has close ties with both Ethiopia and Somalia, training Somalia's security forces and supplying development assistance in return for a foothold on a key global shipping route.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan poses with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed following a press conference in Ankara, Türkiye, on Wednesday. **REUTERS**



Europe at a crossroads: Elections reshape continent amid divisions

BRUSSELS

AS 2024 draws to a close, Romania has become the latest European nation mired in "post-election turmoil." The country is waiting for a new government to set a date for re-electing its president after the Constitutional Court's unprecedented annulment of the presidential election's first round.

Across Europe, similar instability reigns. Multiple governments face votes of confidence, political turmoil sustains, and leadership remains unresolved.

Over 20 regional and national elections this year have failed to settle the political maneuvering on the continent. Instead, the resulting fragmented parliaments and fragile coalitions have left voters hungry for change - and increasingly dissatisfied - as critical issues persist, if not worsen.

ELECTORAL VERDICT: A RIGHTWARD TURN

Romania's political crisis stems from allegations of Russian interference backing far-right candidate Calin Georgescu in the annulled election. Pro-European parties are now struggling to form a majority as leadership disputes and policy divisions stall progress, fueling public frustration.

Romania's predicament mirrors broader fractures and rising far-right influence across Europe. After the European Parliament (EP) elections in June, far-right parties surged in popularity. While center-right forces, led by the European

People's Party (EPP), have maintained their position as the largest bloc, the EP's landscape became more fragmented. Seats held by mainstream coalitions shrank, and the number of parties sharing power grew, undermining prospects for stable majorities.

November brought another political drama: Ursula von der Leyen narrowly secured a second term as the European Commission president. Her approval, the slimmest since 1993, highlighted the division within the EP. Former European Parliament Vice President Jacek Saryusz-Wolski described the process as "the lowest in EP history," marked by "interparty bargains."

This institutional gridlock is compounded by a leadership vacuum at the EU's core. France and Germany, long the bedrock of EU policymaking, are now entangled in domestic crises.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron's party suffered a humiliating defeat in July's snap National Assembly elections, leading to months of political deadlock and the shortest-serving premiership since 1958. In Germany, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's fragile coalition collapsed last month amid budgetary and political chaos. A vote of confidence in Germany is expected to trigger early elections in 2025.

By the end of 2024, far-right parties now hold governing roles in at least seven EU countries, including the Netherlands, Finland, and Italy.

According to London-



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen celebrates after a vote at the headquarters of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Nov. 27, 2024. Xinhua

based think tank Chatham House, growing far-right influence has begun to reshape the European Council, with Eurosceptics increasingly advocating for curtailing EU policymaking in favor of national control.

FORCES DRIVING EUROPEAN SHIFT

The political shifts in Europe reflect years of accumulated voter frustration over economic stagnation, escalating migration pressures, and the enduring strain of regional conflicts.

Economic woes were a central theme in 2024. The Eurozone economy is projected to grow by a meager 0.8 percent, with Germany, its largest economy, contracting for a second consecutive year. Sovereign debt fears resurfaced as France's budget deficit ballooned to 6.2 percent, double the EU's target, reigniting concerns over fiscal discipline.

Meanwhile, high inflation, soaring energy costs and an unrelenting cost-of-living crisis continue to stretch household budgets. In October, tens of thousands of people in Madrid protested over surging housing costs.

Fatigue with the Ukraine crisis also fueled political shifts. Public patience with the EU's 133 billion U.S. dollar aid package is wearing thin, particularly in fiscally strained states like France. In Slovakia, opposition to military support for Ukraine helped propel the far-right to power, while

in Poland, refugee inflows amplified nationalist rhetoric and deepened public division.

The EU's ambitious climate agenda has also faced a backlash. In January, German farmers protested Green Deal regulations, sparking similar demonstrations in Belgium, France, and Poland. The Paris-based Institute for Climate Economics estimated that achieving the EU's 2030 climate targets will require annual investments of 813 billion euros - equivalent to 5.1 percent of the bloc's GDP - which is untenable for many struggling economies.

Migration remains Europe's most politically-charged issue, with mainstream centrist parties increasingly adopting far-right rhetoric on the subject to retain voter support.

In April, the EU overhauled its asylum policies by tightening border controls and expediting deportations. Domestically, Germany reinstated temporary border checks in September, with France, Austria, and others following suit. These measures, however, come at a cost: the erosion of the Schengen Zone's foundational principle of free movement.

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR CHALLENGES

The French think tank Fondapol has highlighted Europe's political dilemmas: progressives are caught between

the demands of mass immigration and ecological transition, and the need to uphold the welfare state and low-income purchasing power.

The shifting geopolitical landscape, marked by Donald Trump's return to the White House, adds uncertainties for the continent. As the "Trump 2.0 era" looms, Europe is bracing for potential consequences: the U.S. withdrawal from NATO, reduced support for Ukraine, and trade wars.

Jian Junbo, deputy director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University, told Xinhua that if these concerns materialize, Europe may prioritize security even at economic expense.

Amid these concerns, far-right parties have been highlighting EU's structural and leadership shortcomings, consolidating their nationalist and Eurosceptic platforms. These tensions have also forced traditional parties to adapt.

"What was once considered radical has now become the new normal," observed Matthijs Rooduijn, a political scientist at the University of Amsterdam.

The electoral choices of 2024 reflect Europe's mounting crises, leaving the continent at a critical crossroads. Whether Europe can overcome its fragmentation - rebuilding trust among voters and unity between member states - will define its future. Yet, one thing is clear: the old approaches are no longer enough. Xinhua

PM Modi to launch multiple development projects

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will visit Uttar Pradesh on December 13 to review development works for the Mahakumbh Mela 2025. During his visit to Prayagraj, he will inaugurate and launch multiple development projects worth over Rs6,670 crore.

According to an official release, PM Modi will reach Prayagraj and, at approximately 12:15 PM, will perform puja and darshan at Sangam Nose. This will be followed by puja at Akshay Vata Vriksh around 12:40 PM, along with darshan and puja at Hanuman Mandir and Saraswati Koop. At around 1:30 PM, the Prime Minister is scheduled to walk through the Mahakumbh exhibition site.

Subsequently, at 2 PM, he will inaugurate and launch a series of development projects worth over Rs6,670 crore in Prayagraj.

The release highlighted that these initiatives include various projects aimed at Mahakumbh 2025, encompassing rail and road infrastructure such as 10 new Road Over Bridges (RoBs) or flyovers, permanent ghats, and riverfront roads. These efforts aim to improve infrastructure and ensure seamless connectivity in Prayagraj.

In alignment with his commitment to a clean and pristine Ganga, PM Modi will also inaugurate projects for intercepting, tapping, diverting, and treating minor drains flowing into the Ganga. These measures will ensure zero discharge of untreated water into the river. Additionally, he will inaugurate several infrastructure projects related to drinking water and electricity.

Further, the Prime Minister will inaugurate major temple corridor projects, including the Bharadwaj Ashram Corridor, Shringverpur Dham Corridor, Akshayvat Corridor, and Hanuman Mandir Corridor. These projects are expected to enhance accessibility for devotees and boost spiritual tourism.

To support Mahakumbh Mela 2025, PM Modi will also launch the Kumbh SahAI'yak chatbot, designed to provide guidance, updates, and event details to devotees.

ANI

EAM Jaishankar wishes Kenya on their Independence Day

NEW DELHI

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar yesterday wished his Kenyan counterpart Musalia W Mudavadi on Jamhuri Day, or independence day.

Jaishankar shared an image of the International Yoga Day being celebrated in Kenya in July this year. In a post on X, he said, "Greetings to FM Musalia W Mudavadi, the Government and people of Kenya on Jamhuri Day."

The Indian embassy in Kenya also extended its wishes on Kenyan independence day.

The Kenyan High Commission in India celebrated Jamhuri Day on December 10.

In a post on X, the Kenyan High Commission said, "Jamhuri day celebrations at the missions come a few days before the National celebration on 12th December."

The event saw participation from Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh.

"Kenya High Commission yesterday marked this year's Jamhuri Day celebrations at a colorful event. Hon'ble Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs & Environment was our chief guest. The event was attended by High Commissioners/Ambassadors and Kenyans in India," the embassy said.

India played a significant role in Kenya's struggles for independence and self-rule; they have remained an important partner in Kenya's development agenda, supporting mainly education, trade, and investments, the embassy further added.

The celebrations of Jamhuri Day this year took place at Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi, where Kenyan heads of state addressed the citizens.

ANI

Syrian militants lift curfew in Damascus, urge residents to return to work

DAMASCUS

SYRIA'S Military Operations Administration announced Wednesday the lifting of a curfew in Damascus and surrounding areas, urging residents to return to work as the country grapples with the aftermath of Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

The announcement coincided with interim Prime Minister Mohammed al-Bashir's call for refugees to return home.

Al-Bashir (pictured), a former regional leader in northwestern Syria, was appointed Tuesday to head a transitional government until March 2025. His appointment follows a swift offensive by a militant alliance led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which captured Damascus within 12 days after launching its offensive from northern Syria on Nov. 27.

Assad has fled the country,

ending five decades of his family's rule.

The new leadership, dominated by the Islamist HTS, has sought to reassure religious minorities and promise that the rights of all religious and ethnic groups will be guaranteed.

Meanwhile, HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani pledged justice for "victims" of Assad's administration, saying that officials in Assad's government involved in torture would not be pardoned.

In the northeast, Kurdish-led forces announced a U.S.-brokered ceasefire on Wednesday with Turkish-backed militants in the strategic city of Manbij. Days of fierce clashes in the Arab-majority city erupted after HTS-led forces ousted the Assad government on Sunday.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led coalition of U.S.-backed militias, reported that 218 combatants



were killed in the fighting and pledged to withdraw from the area "as soon as possible." U.S. Central Command confirmed on Tuesday that its chief, General Michael Kurilla, had visited U.S. bases in Syria and met with SDF partners.

Earlier this month, Turkish-backed forces captured the strategic northern enclave of Tal Rifaat from Kurdish forces, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war

monitor.

Ankara views the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the dominant force within the SDF, as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the United States, and the European Union.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei downplayed the impact of Assad's ouster on Tehran's regional influence, dismissing the notion that the weakening of Syria's role in the "resistance" against Israel would diminish Iran's power. Khamenei accused the United States, Israel, and an unnamed "neighboring country" of orchestrating Assad's downfall.

Qatar announced plans to reopen its embassy in Damascus, citing historical ties and a commitment to support Syria's reconstruction. The decision aligns with Qatar's

efforts to channel humanitarian aid to the Syrian population through an established air bridge.

In July 2011, after the outbreak of the anti-government protests in Syria, Qatar recalled its ambassador to Syria and closed its embassy.

The humanitarian situation remains dire, according to the United Nations. Hospitals are overwhelmed, food shortages persist, and displaced populations face widespread trauma.

The price of bread in cities like Idlib and Aleppo has surged by 900 percent, and over 1 million people have been displaced since the start of the offensive spearheaded by HTS on Dec. 27. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported numerous minefields obstructing movement and aid delivery, with at least 52 identified in the past 10 days.

Xinhua

North Korean human rights abuse is the greatest challenge for humanity

NORTH Korea has evolved into a totalitarian regime characterised by dynastic succession, theocratic governance, and dictatorship since the Korean War.

The entire region has operated solely for the survival and perpetuation of the Workers' Party of North Korea and its leaders - Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un. The cognition and thought processes of the populace are meticulously manipulated by the central power, and any dissenting thought is swiftly eradicated through both physical and psychological means.

The most terrifying aspect of North Korea's power-based human rights violations is the deliberate manipulation of the collective cognitive framework of its citizens for malicious purposes.

This manipulation of collective thought can incite both collective and physical actions dictated by the manipulator's intentions, potential-

ly leading to catastrophic outcomes such as war and mass genocide.

Most alarmingly, the world that individuals perceive as human beings is intentionally distorted, annihilating their sense of life; this constitutes the gravest facet of the human rights violations perpetrated by the North Korean leadership.

All structures of human rights violations in North Korea ultimately serve to maintain, strengthen, and perpetuate the power of the Kim dynasty.

Those who engage in thoughts or actions counter to this regime are labeled as traitors and subversives, and the central authority ensures they are thoroughly controlled to prevent any proximity to dissenting thought.

As a result, North Korea stands as the largest prison on Earth, physically isolating its populace from external information and committing atrocities that are more efficient



than those witnessed during the era of Nazism.

Those who defy the regime or attempt to escape are indiscriminately eliminated, with the distribution of survival resources such as food being determined and applied based on their loyalty to the central party as defined by the ruling authority.

This loyalty-based hierarchical system is enforced through collective punishment. Such a rigid structure of power-based human rights violations has collec-

tively stripped the humanity of the people in the northern region of the Korean Peninsula, rendering North Korea a living hell on Earth.

Key terms associated with the issue of human rights in North Korea include the right to life, individual dignity and freedom, the rights of suspects and detainees, freedom of belief and expression, the right to assembly and association, political participation rights, the right to survival, the right to health, labor rights, educational rights, property rights, the free-

dom of residence and housing rights, the right to marriage and family, political prison camps, forced abortions, collective punishment, biomedical experiments, and public executions.

The system of power-based human rights violations in North Korea has been perpetuated through three generations of dynastic succession, becoming a system that cannot be altered by the will of the current leader.

It is a system that has been accumulated and designed for ex-

pansion, with inertia attached to its actions. This has resulted in a structure that has been increasingly solidified and optimized for the survival of the current leader. North Korea has thus become a region entirely detached from human society, diverging significantly from international norms.

North Korean troops are being deployed to the Ukraine war, and the world is trembling at the prospect of an escalation. Over ten thousand soldiers have been sent. Recent actions by the North Korean regime suggest a strong reaction to the potential collapse of ideological control due to the exposure of internal members to external information, leading to public executions of residents who come into contact with outside information.

In this context, these ten thousand soldiers, having acquired

knowledge of the internal systems and secrets of the North Korean military, are receiving food rations in Russia while being exposed to foreign cultures.

Due to this precarious situation, it is highly likely that the North Korean leadership will not allow these soldiers to return alive, even if they survive the war. Keeping them from leaking military secrets and preventing individuals who have interacted with foreign cultures from re-entering North Korea would be seen as a safe judgment for maintaining the regime. The possibility of treating them as casualties and eliminating them, either directly or indirectly, in Russia is a cost-effective and efficient decision for regime preservation. Essentially, this would mean "paying" for technology and resources from Russia with human lives.

Agencies



Simba SC prioritize Mpanzu registration as Lakred exits

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SIMBA Sports Club's former first-choice goalkeeper, Ayoub Lakred, is set to leave the club during the upcoming transfer window, which opens this Sunday.

The move is aimed at creating room for Congolese winger Elie Mpanzu, whose registration has been a top priority for the Tanzanian giants.

The decision to part ways with a foreign player to accommodate Mpanzu has not been straightforward.

Simba's leadership reportedly debated between releasing either Lakred or midfielder Fabrice Ngoma. However, after lengthy deliberations, the club's management and technical bench, led by head coach Fadlu Davids, appear to have settled on Lakred.

Davids is said to favour Ngoma due to the midfielder's recent improvement and seamless adaptation to Simba's playing system.

Although Ngoma initially struggled to make an impact at the club, his current form has convinced the technical bench of his value to the team.

Additionally, Simba's management believes having two foreign goalkeepers is unnecessary, especially since Moussa Camara has consistently excelled as the club's primary shot-stopper.

A source close to the club revealed: "Ngoma has proven to be a key part of Davids' tactical plans, while Lakred's position has been overshadowed by Camara's performances. It made sense to part ways with the goalkeeper to facilitate Mpanzu's arrival."

Mpanzu officially joined Simba in September but has yet to make his debut due to registration delays.

Speaking about the winger's situation, Simba's spokesperson, Ahmed Ally, confirmed the club's plans for his integration.

"The domestic transfer window opens on December 15, and Mpanzu will be registered then. This means he will be eligible to play in Premier League matches immediately after that date.

"However, for CAF competitions, the

registration window extends to January 2025, so he will only be available for international matches from January," said Ally.

Mpanzu's arrival at Simba has been a long journey. The player initially had trials with Belgium's KRC Genk, but efforts to secure a European move fell through.

Simba then engaged in protracted negotiations with AS Vita Club, Mpanzu's former team, eventually agreeing to a deal despite challenges over transfer fee demands.

Simba's decision to bring in Mpanzu stems from inconsistent performances by their current wingers.

Players such as Joshua Mutale, Edwin Balua, and Kibu Denis have struggled to meet expectations, prompting Davids to emphasize the need for reinforcements in wide areas.

"Mpanzu's versatility will offer us new tactical options and add quality to the team. His signing reflects our commitment to addressing the gaps we've seen in recent matches," a club official noted.

The Congolese winger's addition is expected to energize Simba's attacking options and provide a much-needed boost as the team looks to strengthen its domestic and international campaigns.

Mpanzu is likely to feature in Simba's upcoming Premier League fixtures, including critical matches against Ken Gold FC, Kagera Sugar FC, and Tabora United.

These games will serve as an opportunity for him to integrate into the squad and showcase his abilities.

His arrival comes at a time when Simba is under pressure to deliver strong results in both domestic and CAF competitions.

As Simba prepare for the transfer window, the club's decision to release Lakred underscores the competitive environment within the squad.

With Mpanzu's registration imminent, the focus now shifts to how quickly the Congolese winger can adapt to Davids' system and make an impact on the pitch.

Aces A cricketers now lift 2024 TCA Delaware Champions League trophy

By Correspondent Japheth Kazenga

ABHISHEK Kumar put on a Man-of-the-Match showing to guide Aces A to clinch the 2024 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) Delaware Champions League silverware, having commanded a 43-run defeat of Pak Stars A in the final early this week.

The Asif Butt-led Aces A batted first in the pulsating final, which took place at the Annadil Burhani Oval in Dar es Salaam, scoring 167/5 in the scheduled 20 overs.

They were 21-1 in the first two overs after opener Butt's dismissal.

Butt made his way back with 11 runs, nailing one boundary, and his fellow opener Alishah Bukhari stayed a bit longer to register 17 runs.

There was a setback for Aces A, given one of the trusted performers, Prathamesh Chavan, faced an early dismissal with seven runs to his name.

Chavan's exit in the fourth over had seen Aces A reach 38-2, which meant senior cricketers had to prove their worth for the club.

Aces A were reeling at 38-3 at the time the other opener, Bukhari, had been dismissed after 5.4 overs, as Pak Stars A's bowlers battled to contain the batting squad.

The no-nonsense Kumar then took the crease and made his presence felt with solid knocks, notching 62 runs not out for Aces A.

Zimbabwean Aisah Chibanda took the crease after Bukhari's dismissal, pushing Aces A's figure to 77-4 after he had exited the crease halfway through the innings.

Chibanda, also one of the key players for Aces A, garnered 13 runs from 13 balls during his stay.

His compatriot Jeremiah Makanya, who garnered 24 runs, and Ally Mpeka, who scored 28 runs not out, were the cricketers who equally made notable contributions with the bat.



Aces A cricketers pose with silverware once the 2024 Tanzania Cricket Association (TCA) Delaware Champions League concluded in Dar es Salaam last weekend. Aces A secured victory over Pak Stars A in the final. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TANZANIA CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Makanya's exit had left Aces A at 118-5 after 16.4 overs and, as a result, Mpeka and Kumar had to carry the club's hopes with a formidable sixth-wicket stand.

Pak Stars A's Mohammad Ali and Hassan Raza ended with 2-19 and 2-41, respectively, when the team fielded.

Their impressive bowling figures, however, failed to prevent Aces A from ending their innings with a convincing total.

Pak Stars A, chasing 168 runs from 120 balls to emerge victorious, lost steam after they were skittled for 124 runs in 18.1 overs.

The cricketers' efforts to mount a successful chase had got off to a rather less impressive start given the opener, Nisar Ahmed exited the crease early with a mere nine runs to his name.

His fellow opener Ivan Ismail was equally less convincing at the crease, having been dismissed with a paltry 10 runs.

Pak Stars A moved to 27-2 following the openers' dismissals, prompting the rest of the key performers to improve their game and salvage the innings.

Youthful Mohamed Omary battled to boost his team's figure with his 12 runs.

Seasoned player Zafar Khan also had a less impressive outing, given the cricketer managed to register 12 runs.

The early exits of skipper Kashif Adnan and Hassan Raza proved to be detrimental to Pak Stars A's efforts, as the squad was left reeling at 46-5 after five overs.

The batsmen were both sent back by Aces A's Kumar for duck, as the latter went on a rampage.

Zamoyoni Ramadhan was the batting team's only cricketer with good figures, notching 42 runs.

Ali was Pak Stars A's other cricketer with two digits in the overall underwhelming stint at the crease for the squad.

The player ended his stay with 16 runs. They were somewhat bolstered by 14 extras conceded by Aces A's bowlers.

The extras were made up of seven wides, three byes, and four leg byes.

Kumar wrapped up a scintillating all-round showing after finishing with 4-10 when Aces A fielded.

He was ably assisted by medium pacer Kibwana Salum who dashed Pak Stars A's hopes away with his 2-34.

Kumar moreover had Aces A

holding sway in the showpiece's prizes, having garnered the Player of the Tournament prize.

Kashif Ahmad (Lions A) emerged as the Best Batter of the showdown.

Younis Afridi (Pak Stars A) laid his hands on the tournament's Best Bowler gong.

The final's Man of the Match prize went to the in-form Kumar (Aces A).

Aces A had directly booked a place in the tournament's final after grabbing the top place upon the conclusion of the round-robin phase.

The club, which got off to a wobbly start, went on to lead the rest of the competitors after commanding the best Net Run Rate (NRR) of 0.8135.

In six outings, Aces A emerged victorious in five and lost one, notching 825 runs and leaking 785 runs.

The TCA-organized tournament, involving Division A clubs, is one of the high-profile club events seeking to efficiently develop cricket locally.

Strikers, Pak Stars A, Delaware Upanga SC A, Aga Khan SC, Caravans, Aces A, and Lions A are the teams which have battled it out in the 2024 TCA Delaware Champions League.

Commissioner Goodell says no change to NFL's relationship with Jay-Z amid rape allegations

By Rory Carroll

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell on Wednesday said the league is aware of a lawsuit that accuses musician Jay-Z of rape but said it is not impacting the NFL's partnership with the rap mogul's Roc Nation label, which produces the Super Bowl halftime show.

An amended civil lawsuit filed in federal court on Sunday alleges Jay-Z and Sean "Diddy" Combs raped a 13-year-old girl during a party in New York in 2000.

Jay-Z and Combs have denied the allegations.

"We're aware of the civil allegations and Jay-Z's really strong response to that," Goodell said after the conclusion of the league's winter meetings in Texas.

"We know the litigation is happening now. From our standpoint, our relationship is not changing with them, including our preparations for the next Super Bowl."

Roc Nation has helped produce the past five Super Bowl halftime shows and Jay-Z's wife, Beyonce, is scheduled to perform at halftime of the upcoming Ravens vs. Texans game on Christmas Day in Houston, according to Sports Illustrated.



Recording artist Jay-Z with NFL commissioner Roger Goodell before Super Bowl LVII at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, US, on Feb 12, 2023. Agencies

The lawsuit was originally filed in October in the Southern District of New York and at that time did not name Jay-Z as a defendant, though the amended lawsuit says that Jay-Z was identified as "Celebrity A" on the original complaint.

Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter, has blasted the lawsuit, calling it part of a "blackmail attempt" by the plaintiff's lawyer.

Tony Buzbee, the Texas law-

yer representing the girl who filed Sunday's lawsuit, has filed at least 20 civil lawsuits against Combs accusing him of sexual misconduct.

Buzbee said Jay Z's relationship with the NFL had nothing to do with him.

"My job is to represent my clients zealously and ethically. And that's what I intend to do," he said in response to a request for comment.

Combs has denied all allega-

tions against him. He is currently in jail on federal sex trafficking charges, to which he has pleaded not guilty.

The lawsuit alleges that the unnamed girl was drugged and raped by both Jay-Z and Combs at a party hosted by Combs following the MTV Music Awards in 2000, which was held in New York.

REUTERS

Saka double eases Arsenal past Monaco

LONDON

BUKAYO Saka once again proved the catalyst for Arsenal as his double helped secure a relatively smooth 3-0 home victory against AS Monaco that put the Londoners in sight of the Champions League knockout stage on Wednesday.

Mikel Arteta's side began the fixture outside the top eight in the expanded league stage and with plenty of work to do to avoid being dragged into the playoffs.

It was not all plain sailing for the hosts who were guilty of some profligate finishing but England forward Saka took his season tally to nine goals in all competitions as Arsenal moved into third place in the table.

Arsenal, who have Dinamo Zagreb and Girona still to play, have 13 points while Monaco, who began the evening level with them, are 16th with 10 points.

Saka swept in a Gabriel Jesus cross in the 34th minute and just when it looked as though a succession of misses by his teammates could prove costly, Monaco presented him with a gift-wrapped second in the 78th minute.

Substitute Kai Havertz rubber-stamped Arsenal's fourth win from six games in this year's competition in the 88th minute.

"In the first half we should have put the game to bed but we didn't," Arteta said. "In the Champions League you will have difficult moments and we suffered. Then with the second goal the game was in control."

With defensive injuries forcing his hand, Arteta gave a first Champions League start to 18-year-old Myles Lewis-Skelly and the left back played a key role in Saka's opener.

Shrugging off a challenge, he showed great vision to pierce Monaco's defensive line with a pinpoint pass to Jesus who slid the ball across the area for Saka to convert.

"A really proud moment," Arteta said of Lewis-Skelly. "He is one of our own and a joy to watch. It's great we can trust him to play in this environment."

A youthful Monaco's initial poise evaporated after the opener and they were fortunate not to be buried before the interval.

A dreadful mistake by Soungoutou Magassa sent Martin Odegaard clear through on goal. The Norwegian looked certain to score but rolled his shot wide of the post.

Jesus, who has scored only once in 19 appearances this season, had earlier spurned a one-on-one and another good chance, both times denied by Monaco keeper Radoslaw Majekci.

His fellow Brazilian Gabriel Martinelli was also guilty as Arsenal arrived at halftime somehow only one goal ahead.

Heartened by those escapes, Monaco threatened to make Arsenal pay in the second half with Thilo Kehrer flashing a header just wide from a swinging free kick and former Liverpool player Takumi Minamino then shooting too close to David Raya when the ball was cut back to him in the area.

REUTERS

Pep Guardiola stays positive after Man City woes continue at Juve

TURIN, Italy

MANCHESTER City manager Pep Guardiola remained upbeat after watching his team lose 2-0 at Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday to continue their alarming form slump.

Guardiola's side anguish 22nd in the Champions League table, only three places out of automatic elimination from the competition with two games remaining.

The Premier League champions have recorded just one victory in their last 10 games across all competitions.

"We played good, really really good," Guardiola told reporters. "So we missed the last pass, the last action, of course, some transitions happen, but I'm so proud of these players, they give everything and they tried, and now we live in this period, and hopefully we can change and get results."

"I know it's difficult, it's difficult in Champions League in Europe, but we play really good."

City's last two matches in the group phase are against Paris St Germain and Club Brugge.

The competition's new format sees the top eight teams after eight rounds of the league phase advance into the round of 16 and avoid a playoff, which is now almost out of reach for Guardiola's team.

"We have two games. We need one point maybe, one victory, the last one is at home, and the situation is because the game against Feyenoord (when City gave up a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3) and especially Inter Milan (a 0-0 draw)," the Spaniard said.

"But our three games away were really, really, really tough and you have to accept it. And when we turn around, we don't forget that period, we appreciate more what we have done in the past, what they are going to in the future."

City host local rivals Manchester United in the Premier League on Sunday.

REUTERS

FIFA confirms Saudi Arabia as 2024 World Cup host despite human rights concerns

ZURICH

Saudi Arabia was officially confirmed Wednesday by FIFA as host of the 2024 World Cup in men's soccer, giving the oil-rich kingdom its biggest prize yet for massive spending on global sports driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The Saudi bid was the only candidate and was acclaimed by the applause of more than 200 FIFA member federations. They took part remotely in an online meeting hosted in Zurich by the soccer body's president Gianni Infantino.

"The vote of the congress is loud and clear," said Infantino, who had asked officials on a bank of screens to clap their hands at head level to show their support.

The decision was combined with approving the only candidate to host the 2030 World Cup. Spain, Portugal and Morocco will co-host in a six-nation project, with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay each getting one of the 104 games.

The South American connection will mark the centenary of Uruguay hosting the first World Cup in 1930.

The decisions complete a mostly opaque 15-month bid process which Infantino helped steer toward Saudi Arabia without a rival candidate, without taking questions, and which human rights



groups warn will put the lives of migrant workers at risk.

"We look forward to hosting an exceptional and unprecedented edition of the FIFA World Cup by harnessing our strengths and capabilities to bring joy to football fans around the world," Prince Mohammed said in a statement.

FIFA and Saudi officials have said hosting the 2024 tournament can accelerate change, including more freedoms and rights for women, with Infantino on Wednesday calling the World Cup a "unique catalyst for positive social change and unity."

"I fully trust our hosts to address all open points in this process, and deliver a World Cup that meets the world's expectations," the FIFA president said.

An international collective of rights groups said FIFA made a "reck-

less decision" to approve Saudi Arabia without getting public assurances, and the Football Supporters Europe group said it was "the day football truly lost its mind."

A fast-track path to victory was cleared last year by FIFA accepting the three-continental hosting plan for the 2030 World Cup. It meant only soccer federations in Asia and Oceania were eligible for the 2024 contest, and FIFA gave countries less than four weeks to declare a bid. Only Saudi Arabia did.

The win will kick off a decade of scrutiny on Saudi labor laws and treatment of workers mostly from South Asia needed to help build and upgrade 15 stadiums, plus hotels and transport networks ahead of the 104-game tournament.

Amnesty International said awarding the tour-

namment to Saudi Arabia represents "a moment of great danger" for human rights.

"FIFA's reckless decision to award the 2024 World Cup to Saudi Arabia without ensuring adequate human rights protections are in place will put many lives at risk," said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International's Head of Labor Rights and Sport.

One of the stadiums is planned to be 350 meters (yards) above the ground in Neom – a futuristic city that does not yet exist – and another named for the crown prince is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff near Riyadh.

During the bid campaign, FIFA has accepted limited scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's human rights record that was widely criticized this year at the United Nations.

Saudi and international rights groups and activists warned FIFA it has not learned the lessons of Qatar's much-criticized preparations to host the 2022 World Cup.

"At every stage of this bidding process, FIFA has shown its commitment to human rights to be a sham," Cockburn said.

The kingdom plans to spend tens of billion of dollars on projects related to the World Cup as part of the crown prince's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. At its core is spending on

sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund, which he oversees.

"It's amazing. The infrastructure, the stadiums, the conditions for the fans and everything. After what I see, I'm more convinced that 2024 will be the best World Cup ever," Cristiano Ronaldo said in a recorded package posted on X.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has been part of Saudi Arabia's lavish spending on soccer – stunning the sport when agreeing to sign for Al Nassr in 2022 for a record-breaking salary reportedly worth up to \$200 million a year.

Critics have accused Saudi Arabia of "sportswashing" the kingdom's reputation.

The prince, known as MBS, has built close working ties to Infantino since 2017 – aligning with the organizer of sport's most-watched event rather than directly confronting the established system as it did with the disruptive LIV Golf project.

The result for Saudi Arabia and FIFA has been smooth progress toward the win Wednesday with limited push-back from soccer officials, though some from women international players.

The steady flow of Saudi cash into international soccer is set to increase.

FIFA created a new and higher World Cup sponsor category for state oil

firm Aramco, and Saudi funding is set to underwrite the 2025 Club World Cup in the United States that is a pet project for Infantino.

North American soccer body CONCACAF signed a multi-year deal with PIF, Saudi stadiums host Super Cup games for Italy and Spain, and nearly 50 FIFA member federations have signed working agreements with Saudi counterparts.

Lavish spending by PIF-owned Saudi clubs in the past two years buying and paying players – including Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Karim Benzema and Sadio Mané – put hundreds of millions of dollars into European soccer.

That influence could be key in talks to agree which months to play the 2024 World Cup. The November-December slot taken by Qatar in 2022 to avoid extreme midsummer heat is complicated in 2024 by the holy month of Ramadan through mid-December and Riyadh hosting the multi-sport Asian Games.

Still, January 2024 could be an option – and likely better for European clubs and leagues – after the International Olympic Committee said it saw few issues in clashing with the Salt Lake Winter Games opening Feb. 10, 2024. The IOC also has a major commercial deal with Saudi Arabia, to host the new Esports Olympics.

AP

Saudi Arabia will host the 2024 World Cup. But when exactly?

ZURICH

SAUDI Arabia scored a major win in its campaign to attract major sports events to the kingdom when it was formally appointed as the 2024 World Cup host on Wednesday.

Still, many questions remain about the tournament as well as the 2030 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with three games in South America.

Here are some of the key issues that need to be answered over the next decade:

***Where will games be played?**

Saudi Arabia proposes 15 stadiums – eight still on paper – in five cities: Eight in the capital Riyadh, four in the Red Sea port city Jeddah, and one each in Abha, Al Khobar and Neom, the planned futuristic mega-project. Each would have at least 40,000 seats for World Cup games.

The opening game and final are set for a 92,000-seat venue planned in Riyadh. Some designs are vivid. In Neom, the stadium is planned 350 meters (yards) above street level and one near Riyadh is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff with a retractable wall of LED screens.

Saudi Arabia aims to host all 104 games, though there has been speculation that some games could be played in neighboring or nearby

countries.

***When will the World Cup be played?**

Surely not in the traditional World Cup period of June-July, when temperatures in Saudi Arabia routinely exceed 40 Celsius (104 degrees).

FIFA moved the Qatar-hosted World Cup to November-December 2022, though those dates were not loved by most European clubs and leagues whose seasons were interrupted. Also, that slot is complicated in 2024 by the holy month of Ramadan through mid-December and Riyadh hosting the multi-sport Asian Games.

January 2024 could be a possibility even though that would be just before the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. The International Olympic Committee has signaled it won't be opposed to back-to-back major events.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, Saudi World Cup bid official Hammad Albalawi said the precise dates of the tournament are up the world soccer body.

"That's a decision by FIFA. We stand ready to be part of this conversation. But ultimately it's a FIFA decision together with the confederations," Albalawi said.

"Will stadiums be segregated for men and women?"

Giving more rights and freedoms to women in a traditionally conserva-

tive society is fundamental to Saudi messaging around the modernization program known as Vision 2030.

The kingdom decided in 2017 to let women attend sports events, initially in major cities and in family zones separate from men-only sections.

By 2024, at the promised pace of social reforms, female fans should not be restricted.

Saudi Arabia launched a women's professional soccer league in 2022 with players joining from clubs in Europe. They face no restrictions playing in shorts and with hair uncovered.

"Will alcohol be allowed at the venues or hotels?"

The Saudi prohibition of alcohol is clear and understood before FIFA signs any sponsor deals for 2024. But will there

be any exceptions?

The alcohol issue was problematic for the World Cup in Qatar because the expectation was created that beer sales would be allowed at stadiums even before Qatar won its bid in 2010. One year later, FIFA extended a long-time deal to have Budweiser as the official World Cup beer through 2022.

Qatar then backtracked on that promise three days before the first game, causing confusion and the sense of a promise broken.

In Qatar, alcohol was served only at luxury suites at the stadiums. Visitors could also have a drink in some hotel bars.

But Saudi Arabia has even stricter rules on alcohol – and there is no indication that will change.

Albalawi noted that

Saudi Arabia has successfully hosted dozens of sports events where alcohol wasn't served.

"We're creating a safe and secure family environment for fans to bring their families into our stadiums," he said.

***How will workers rights be protected?**

Saudi promises to reform and enforce labor laws, and fully respect migrant workers, have been accepted by FIFA but face broad skepticism from rights groups and trade unions. A formal complaint is being investigated by the U.N.-backed International Labor Organization.

Protecting the migrant workers needed to build stadiums and other tournament projects – a decade after it was a defining issue for Qatar – looms as a signature challenge for Saudi

Arabia.

"Would Israel be allowed to play if it qualified for the 2024 World Cup?"

Saudi-Israeli relations had been improving when FIFA all but gave the 2024 World Cup to the kingdom on Oct. 4 last year. Three days later Hamas attacked Israel and diplomacy got more complicated.

Any soccer federation bidding to host a FIFA tournament accepts a basic principle that whichever team qualifies is welcome.

That did not stop Indonesia putting up barriers last year to Israel coming for the men's Under-20 World Cup. Indonesia does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel which had qualified through a European tournament nine months before the issue flared. AP

Gwiji by David Chikoko



SPORT

FIFA confirms Saudi Arabia as 2034 World Cup host despite human rights concerns

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Serengeti Boys set for 'Group of Death' clash in Uganda

By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

TANZANIA'S U17 team has been placed in Group A alongside Kenya and Uganda in a redraw conducted yesterday for the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) CECAFA U17 qualifiers, a group widely regarded as the "group of death."

The tournament is scheduled to take place in Uganda from December 14 to 28, 2024, offering a critical platform for young players to showcase their skills while vying for a spot in the AFCON U17 finals set for 2025.

The tournament will be hosted in three Ugandan cities: Bukedea, Mbale, and Kampala. These venues were selected for their footballing infrastructure and readiness to host matches of this caliber.

The redraw became necessary after Ethiopia and Burundi withdrew from the AFCON qualifiers. Initially drawn in Group A with Tanzania and Uganda, their exit left the group with only two teams.

Tanzania's national U17 team has already arrived in Uganda, where they conducted their first training session at Nakivubo Stadium ahead of the competition.

CECAFA subsequently announced a redraw to ensure that both groups had three teams each, with Tanzania now in a group they were hoping to avoid.

In the initial draw, Kenya had been set to face Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan - a group considered relatively easier.

Now, Tanzania will face two strong sides, with the top two teams from the group advancing to the semifinals. The finalists will qualify for next year's U17 AFCON. Group B comprises Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

The Serengeti Boys, under the leadership of head coach Aggrey Morris and assistant coach Boniface Pawasa, are training intensively to ensure they are fully equipped for the challenge ahead.

The AFCON U17 qualifiers represent more than just a football competition for Tanzania; they are a stepping stone for developing young talent, providing a vital foundation for the country's footballing future.

Previously, the Serengeti Boys' head coach expressed satisfaction with the team's progress, praising the players' hard work and their understanding of the tournament's importance.

"We're working tirelessly to assemble a formidable team for the AFCON U17 qualifiers. The players are incredibly motivated and eager to secure a victory. Our ultimate objective is to qualify for the AFCON U17 finals, and we're dedicated to doing whatever it takes to make that happen," said the gaffer.

Additionally, ahead of the tournament, Yusuf Mossi, the CECAFA Competitions Director, stated that stringent measures have been put in place to ensure fair play and compliance with the competition's age eligibility rules.

Mossi said all teams participating are required to carry out Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) tests for the players before traveling to Uganda for the tournament.

Upon arrival in Uganda, the players will undergo further MRI tests conducted by designated Confederation of African Football (CAF) doctors.

In the last Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) U17 Zonal qualifiers held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2022, Somalia beat South Sudan 3-1 in the final.

Yanga determined to overcome TP Mazembe in Lubumbashi test



By Correspondent Nassir Nchimbi

YOUNG Africans SC have declared that they won't rely on past victories against TP Mazembe as motivation for their crucial CAF Champions League Group A clash tomorrow at Stade TP Mazembe in Lubumbashi, DR Congo.

The Saeed Ramovic-coached side has struggled to find consistency lately, registering only one win in their last five matches across all competitions.

The team departed for Lubumbashi yesterday and was scheduled to train upon arrival and again today to prepare for tomorrow's high-stakes match.

In the 2022/23 CAF Confederations Cup Group D, Young Africans defeated TP Mazembe 1-0 in an away match, with Farid Mussa scoring the decisive goal. They had also secured a 3-1 victory in the earlier group stage match at

Benjamin Mkapa Stadium. Despite these results, the Tanzanian champions stress that they are not dwelling on past performances.

"The match against TP Mazembe is incredibly challenging. Focusing on past records isn't beneficial, as they've evolved significantly in the last two seasons," said Ali Kamwe, Young Africans' Media and Information Manager.

"Their performances against MC Alger and Al

Hilal demonstrate their threat. They're determined to bounce back, just like we are."

Young Africans face a tough test as both teams aim to recover from recent defeats. Young Africans suffered a 2-0 loss to MC Alger in their previous match, while TP Mazembe fell 2-1 to Al Hilal Omdurman.

Al Hilal currently lead Group A with six points, followed by MC Alger with four points. Both teams will also meet tomorrow in an

other critical encounter.

Kamwe noted that TP Mazembe have undergone significant changes, including new players, coaching staff, and a different playing style compared to their previous encounters.

In the DR Congo Linafoot league, TP Mazembe currently lead Group A with an impressive record: six wins, one draw, and one loss in eight games, amassing 19 points.

"We approach this match with immense respect for

TP Mazembe while aiming to return to winning ways. Our fans have shown incredible support by organizing trips to Lubumbashi to cheer us on. This dedication should inspire our players to fight for the badge," Kamwe added.

"Our squad is almost complete, with only Chadrack Boka missing due to injury."

Young Africans find themselves in a precarious position in the CAF Champions League, having failed to score a single goal in their first two matches - a record they share with Djoliba AC Bamako of Mali.

They suffered a 2-0 defeat at home to Al Hilal Omdurman and a similar loss away to MC Alger. The back-to-back losses have left Young Africans at the bottom of Group A.

Coach Ramovic (pictured) faces the daunting task of addressing both defensive and attacking shortcomings to revive his team's performance.

Tomorrow's match against TP Mazembe is pivotal for the Jangwani Street giants. A positive result could reignite their hopes of advancing to the quarter-finals.

Following this double-header against TP Mazembe, Young Africans will face Al Hilal away and host MC Alger in their final two group stage matches.

Kagoma fit again as Simba prepare for CAF Confederation Cup battle

By Correspondent Seth Mapoli

SIMBA SC midfielder Yusuph Kagoma could make a return to the squad this Sunday when the Tanzanian giants face Tunisia's CS Sfaxien in their third-round group stage match of the CAF Confederation Cup.

The highly anticipated encounter will take place at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam.

Kagoma has been sidelined since October 19 after sustaining an injury during Simba's Premier League derby against rivals Young Africans. However, the club's Information and Communication Manager, Ahmed Ally, has revealed that the midfielder has fully recovered and is now available for selection.

"Kagoma has been out of action for a long time due to injuries. Now, he is fit and ready to be included in the squad if coach Fadlu Davids deems it necessary," said Ahmed during a press briefing.

The return of Kagoma would be a significant boost for Simba, who are looking to strengthen their midfield ahead of the crucial clash.

Meanwhile, winger Joshua Mutale is also on the road to recovery after picking up an injury while representing Zambia during the international break.

Mutale's absence has also been a blow to Simba, as he is considered one of the key attacking options for the team.

Both Kagoma and Mutale have



faced challenges with recurring injuries, which have kept them off the field for extended periods.

Their recoveries come at a critical time for Simba, who are aiming to secure maximum points and improve their position in Group A.

Ally has called on Simba fans to purchase their tickets in advance and turn out in large numbers to support the team on Sunday.

Speaking at a rally held in Tandika earlier this week, Ally emphasized the importance of the fans' presence at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium.

"CS Sfaxien have lost both of their opening matches and will come determined to win against Simba. However, with 60,000 passionate fans behind us at Benjamin Mkapa Stadium, we are confident of securing all three points and keeping them at home,"

Ally stated.

He stressed that the energy of the fans will be crucial in inspiring the team to victory in this vital group-stage encounter.

Simba are currently second in Group A with three points, trailing leaders CS Constantine, who have six points from their opening two matches.

Angola's Bravos do Maquis are also on three points but sit third due to goal difference, while CS Sfaxien remain at the bottom with no points after back-to-back losses.

As Simba prepare to face CS Sfaxien, group leaders CS Constantine will take on Bravos do Maquis in the other Group A fixture.

Simba have been conducting their training sessions at the Mo Arena facilities in Bunju as they gear up for Sunday's match.

Head coach Fadlu Davids is focused on fine-tuning the team's tactics to ensure they capitalize on their home advantage and secure a vital victory.

Sunday's match is pivotal for Simba as they aim to strengthen their bid for a spot in the knockout stages of the CAF Confederation Cup.

With the top two teams from each group advancing, securing three points against CS Sfaxien would solidify Simba's position and keep their hopes alive.

Fans are expected to flock to Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in full force, creating an electric atmosphere to push the home team toward a crucial win.

Flexibles by David Chikoko

